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SCOTTISH DIVINES:

WITH

LIVES OF THE AUTHORS, AND NOTES,

BY

JAMES COCHRANE, A.M.

LIBRARIAN TO THE EDINBURGH THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY.

VOL. I.—BINNING.

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM WHYTE & CO.

BOOKSELLERS TO THE QUEEN DOWAGER;

GLASGOW, W. COLLINS; ABERDEEN, A. BROWN AND CO.;

LONDON, LONGMAN, ORME, AND CO.

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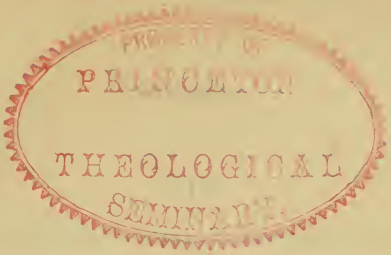

CONTENTS.

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR . . . . iii—xxv

THE COMMON PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION CLEARLY PROVED AND SINGULARLY IMPROVED, OR A PRACTICAL CATECHISM.

I.

GOD'S GLORY THE CHIEF END OF MAN'S BEING.

Rom. xi. 36.—Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. And, 1 Cor. x. 31.—Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God . 7

II.

UNION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD THE END AND DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL.

Psalm lxxiii. 24. to the end.—Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, &c. Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c. It is good for me to draw near to God. 1 John i. 3.—These things declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. John xvii. 21, 22, 23.—That they all may be one as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one, &c. . 18

III.

THE AUTHORITY AND UTILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 Tim. iii. 16.—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness . . . 28

IV.

THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

John v. 39.—Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me. Eph. ii. 20.—And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets 37

V.

THE SCRIPTURES EXHIBIT CHRIST THE SURE FOUNDATION.

Eph. ii. 20.—And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone 52

VI.

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH: THE RUIN AND RECOVERY OF MAN,—FAITH AND LOVE TOWARDS CHRIST.

2 Tim. i. 13.—Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus 59

VII.

UNSEARCHABLENESS AND PERFECTION OF GOD.

Exod. iii. 13, 14.—When they shall say unto me, what is his name? what shall I say? And God said, I AM THAT I AM 78

VIII.

THE ETERNITY AND UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD.

Exod. iii. 14.—I AM THAT I AM. Psal. xc. 2.—Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Job xi. 7, 8, 9.—Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? &c. 89

IX.

GOD IS MERCIFUL.

Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.—The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands . . 101

X

THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD.

John iv. 24.—God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth . . 117

XI.

THE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP OF GOD.

John iv. 24.—God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth . . 125

XII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY.

Deut. vi. 4.—Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. 1 John v. 7.—There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one 140

XIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY INSTRUCTIVE AND CONSOLATORY.

Deut. vi. 4.—Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Job v. 7.—Yet man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward 146

XIV.

THE DECREES OF GOD.

Eph. i. 11. latter part.—Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Job xxiii. 13.—He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth even that he doeth 155

XV.

GOD HATH MADE ALL THINGS FOR HIS OWN GLORY.

Eph. i. 11.—In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, &c. Rom. ix. 22, 23.—What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, &c. 172

XVI.

GOD HATH MADE ALL THINGS FOR HIS OWN GLORY.

Rom. ix. 22.—What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction. Eph. i. 11. —In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will . 184

XVII.

THE WORK OF CREATION.

Heb. xi. 3.—Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed. See also Gen. i. . . 192

XVIII.

OF CREATION.

Heb. xi. 3.—Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Heb. i. 14.—Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? . 200

XIX.

OF THE CREATION OF MAN.

Gen. i. 26, 27.—And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. With Eph. iv. 24.—And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. And Heb. iii. 10.—Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do alway err in their heart, and they have not known my ways 205

XX.

GOD'S WORKS OF PROVIDENCE.

Rom. xi. 36.—For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen. Psal. ciii. 19.—The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Matt. x. 29.—Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your father . . 212

XXI.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE TOWARDS MAN.

Gen. ii. 17.—But of the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Gen. i. 26.—And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth 219

XXII.

OF THE FIRST COVENANT, AND THE TERMS THEREOF.

Gal. iii. 12.—The law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them. Gen. ii. 17.—But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die 227

XXIII.

WHAT MAN ONCE WAS, AND WHAT HE HATH MADE HIMSELF.

Eccl. vii. 29.—Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions 235

XXIV.

THE EVIL OF ADAM'S FIRST SIN.

Rom. v. 12.—Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned 241

XXV.

THE WAY OF MAN'S DELIVERY FROM DEATH.

1 Tim. i. 15.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners 250

THE SINNER'S SANCTUARY; OR, A DISCOVERY MADE OF THOSE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES OFFERED UNTO THE PENITENT AND FAITHFUL UNDER THE GOSPEL; BEING FORTY-EIGHT SERMONS ON THE EIGHTH CHAPTER OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

I.

Rom. viii. 1.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit . . . 257

II.

Verse 1.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, &c. . . . 273

III.

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit 280

IV.

Verse 1.—Same Text . . . 293

V.

Verse 1.—Same Text . . . 305

VI.

Verse 1.—Same Text . . . 314

VII.

Verse 2.—For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death . 323

VIII.

Verse 2.—Same Text . . . 332

IX.

Verse 2.—Same Text . . . 339

X.

Verse 3.—For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh 347

XI.

Verse 3.—Same Text . . . 356

XII.

Verse 3.—Same Text . . . 365

XIII.

Verse 3.—And for sin condemned sin in the flesh . 375

XIV.

Verse 4.—That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us 383

XV.

Verse 4.—Same Text . . . 390

XVI.

Verse 4, 5.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh, &c. . 397

LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

THOUGH the author of the following discourses occupied by no means an inconspicuous place among his contemporaries, and for nearly the last two hundred years his name and works have been familiar to Scottish Christians, very few particulars of his life have been recorded. A very few pages indeed are sufficient to exhibit all that can now be related concerning him. The edition of his works, in a small quarto, published in 1735, contains a Memoir prefixed, of a length much more proportioned to the worth and eminency of its subject, than to the information it communicates. This has furnished the substance of all the subsequent Lives of our author; and however desirable it might be to supplement the scanty details of this very imperfect narrative, the utmost that can be done is the addition of a few particulars gathered from other sources to the facts specified in this ancient biographical notice.

Hugh Binning appears to have been born in 1627. His father was John Binning, proprietor of Dalvennan, an estate in the parish of Straiton, Ayrshire; his mother, Margaret M'Kell, daughter of Mr. Matthew M'Kell, minister at Bothwell, and sister to Mr. Hugh M'Kell, one of the ministers of Edinburgh. From the comparative affluence of his father's circumstances,

Hugh, who was the eldest son, enjoyed the means and opportunity of receiving the best education the country could then afford. Nor were these neglected. His father seems to have paid great attention to his son's intellectual and literary improvement, and that attention was rewarded by the development of extraordinary talents and uncommon diligence in the prosecution of his studies. It is said that at school he greatly outstripped his compeers in the successful prosecution of his studies, and made distinguished progress, especially in the language and literature of ancient Rome.

Another feature in his character in early youth must not be omitted. This was his piety. God, who had bestowed upon him gifts of a very high order, had also vouchsafed uncommon graces; and these too were apparent in the days of his boyhood. It is recorded that even then he delighted to engage in the exercises of private devotion, willingly abandoning the sports and diversions common to his years, that he might give himself up to meditation and prayer; and that he sought the friendship and relished the conversation of religious persons. In his thirteenth or fourteenth year, he had attained to such experience in the Christian life, that even advanced Christians felt and declared his conversation to be in no ordinary degree instructive and edifying. "He began," says Mr. M'Ward, minister of Glasgow, and one of his contemporaries, "early to have sweet familiarity with God, and to live in the most intimate fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, before others begin seriously to mind religion, or to lay to heart their lost condition by nature, or the misery they are involved in by walking in a wicked way. When he arrived at the thirteenth or fourteenth year of his age, he had then attained so

much Christian gravity and composure of spirit, so much delight in Christian exercises, and so much experience in the ways of God, that the most judicious Christians in the place, who frequently did meet for prayer, conference, and mutual edification, not only admitted him as a member of their society, but, with great admiration, beheld the grace of God in him; and often acknowledged how much they were instructed and edified by this pious youth; nay, that he provoked them to more diligence, and fervour, and frequency in the duties of religion, when they found themselves outdone and outrun by a child of thirteen."

Before his fourteenth year he entered the University of Glasgow. And here too, his progress was so rapid and remarkable,—easily surpassing others, and acquiring without difficulty the abstrusest parts of human science,—that he soon attracted the special notice of the professors. Having finished his course of philosophy, he was laureat, or became master of arts in 1646, with great applause. But although he was thus rapidly advancing in human learning and literary distinction, his piety, we are told, suffered no decay. He was still spiritually minded, truly humble, and prosecuting the Christian's great work. The religious principles which had budded so freshly in earlier years, were still vigorously expanding, and affording the promise of abundant increase.

The object of his life was the ministry of the gospel. He accordingly, immediately after his laureation, entered upon the study of divinity, under the tuition of the well-known David Dickson. At this time, a vacancy occurred in the college of Glasgow, by the resignation of Mr. James Dalrymple of Stair, afterwards well known as Lord Stair, the author of the Institu-

tions of the Law of Scotland. Binning was induced, by the importunity of friends, to stand candidate for the vacant office, and after a comparative trial was chosen professor. It was customary at this time to make the election to such offices depend on a public competition. A programme was issued to other universities, and learned men were invited to dispute publicly for the vacant professorship, on the understanding that it should be given to him who should approve himself the worthier and more learned. The ministers of Glasgow felt it to be a matter of great importance that the situation should be filled by one, as eminent for his piety as distinguished for his ability and literary attainments; and accordingly, as the season of disputation drew nigh, they urged him the more strongly, and, as we have said, successfully, to enter the lists as a competitor. We are told that there were two candidates more, one of them possessing the favour and influence of Dr. Strang, then principal of the college of Glasgow, the other a scholar of great ability, and of similar sentiments with the principal on some problematical points of divinity then keenly debated in the schools. In the disputation which took place, it appears that Binning acquitted himself with extraordinary skill and success; his learning and talents were confessed to be greater than those of his rivals; and in the issue he was elected regent or professor of philosophy.

Binning had not reached his nineteenth year when he entered upon the duties of his professorship; but although he was thus required to commence the work of public tuition with all the disadvantages of youth, inexperience, and the want of a regularly prepared system of philosophy, such, we are told, were the

quickness and fertility of his invention, the tenaciousness of his memory, and the solidity of his judgment, that his prelections were equally distinguished for profound learning and an elegant and perspicuous style. He was among the first in Scotland who began to reform philosophy, rescuing it from the barbarous terms and unintelligible distinctions of the schoolmen, and substituting solid and useful knowledge in the room of the subtle and trifling disputations of the ancient dialecticians.

He continued in this office for three years, and exercised its functions so well as to gain the general applause of the university. All the while, however, his thoughts were turned towards the ministry of the gospel, and with the view of qualifying himself for this, the great business of his life, he applied himself to the study of theology with equal ability and success. His memory at this time is said to have been so retentive, that he could easily transcribe a sermon he had heard, and that too at full length, without a sentence a-wanting.

At this period he composed a discourse on the text, 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of God constraineth us, because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead." This performance he sent to a certain gentlewoman who had been detained at Edinburgh for a considerable time with business of importance. Having perused the discourse, she was impressed with the conviction, that it was a sermon by some eminent minister in the west of Scotland, and put it into the hands of the then provost of Edinburgh for his opinion. The provost was so well satisfied with it, that, conceiving it to be taken from the mouth of one whom the city had formerly resolved to call, proceeded to take steps for having him invited to become one of the

ministers of Edinburgh ; and it was not till the lady had returned to Glasgow that the mistake was discovered. This was the first proof he had given of his great dexterity and ability in explaining Scripture.

At the close of his third year as professor of philosophy, the parish of Govan, which lies adjacent to the city of Glasgow, and is within the bounds of that presbytery, happened to be vacant. Before this time, whoever was principal of the college of Glasgow was also minister of Govan; but this being attended with inconveniences, an alteration was made, and the presbytery having a view of supplying that vacancy with Mr. Binning, took him upon trials, in order to his being licensed as a preacher, and, after he was licensed, he preached at Govan to the great satisfaction of the people. Sometime after he was invited to be minister of that parish. The presbytery heartily approved of the call, and entered him upon trials for ordination. This was in 1649, about the twenty-second year of his age. As part of his trials, they prescribed to him a common head, "De concursu et influxu divino cum actionibus creaturarum ;" the occasion of which was, that Dr. Strang, principal of the college, and a member of the presbytery, had given utterance to some peculiar notions upon that profound subject. Having delivered a very elaborate discourse on this subject, *vivâ voce*, and to the admiration of all who heard it, he gave in, according to custom, his thesis to be impugned by the members of the presbytery, which was the direct antithesis of Dr. Strang's opinion as expressed in his dictates to the students on that controversy. The doctor being pitched upon to be one of his opponents, found his credit and reputation much engaged, and called into exercise on the occasion all his sub-

tlety and metaphysical talent. Binning, however, maintained his ground by the weight and solidity of his defence, to the great satisfaction of all who were present, so that some were pleased to say, that young Mr. Binning appeared to be the old learned doctor. Dr. Strang himself, after the rencounter, admiring Binning's abilities and skill, exclaimed, Where has this young man got all this learning and reading? When he had finished his trials, he had the unanimous approbation of the presbytery; nay, their declaration and testimony of his fitness to be one of the ministers of the city, upon the first vacancy; and we are informed that at the very same time the masters of the university had it in their view to bring him back again to their society, whenever the professorship of divinity should become vacant.

From a child he had known the Scriptures, and from his boyhood he had been under much deep and spiritual exercise, until the time, or a little before it, of his entry upon the office of the ministry. At this period he obtained a great calm and lasting tranquillity of mind, being mercifully relieved of all those doubtings which had for a long time greatly exercised him; and though he was of a tender and weakly constitution, yet love to Christ, and a concern for the good of precious souls committed to him, constrained him to such diligence in feeding the flock, that he rejoiced to spend himself in the work of the ministry. It was observed of him, that he was not much averse at any time from embracing an invitation to preach before the most experienced Christians, even the learned professors of the university, and the reverend ministers of the city. One of his most intimate friends having been struck with the apparent inconsistency of this with his habi-

tual modesty and self-denial, took the freedom to ask him, how he came to be so easily prevailed upon to preach before persons of so great experience and judgment, whose eminent gifts and graces he highly valued and esteemed. To this he made the following excellent reply, that when he had a clear call to mention his blessed Master's name in any place, he had no more to say, but here am I, send me,—what am I that I should resist his heavenly call? And when he whose name is holy and reverend is spoken of and to, and is there present, the presence of no other person is to be regarded or dreaded; and that under this impression, he forgot who was present, and who absent.

It was at this period, and while prosecuting with diligence and success, the duties of his ministry, that he turned his thoughts to marriage, and was united to a virtuous and excellent person, Mary, daughter to Mr. James Simpson, a minister in Ireland. Upon the day on which he was to be married, he went, accompanied with his friends, amongst whom were some grave and worthy ministers, to a neighbouring country church, where the congregation had assembled for their weekly sermon. The minister of the parish delayed sermon till they should come, hoping to put the work upon one of the ministers he expected to be there. All of them however declined it. He next tried if he could prevail with the bridegroom and succeeded, though the invitation was not expected, and the nature of the occasion seemed to be somewhat alien from his being employed in that work. It was no difficult task to him, upon a short warning, to preach; having been richly endowed with the gift of utterance, and never at a loss for words or matter, he could at any time speak to edification; so having stept aside a little to preme-

ditate and implore his Master's presence and assistance, for he was ever afraid to be alone in that work, he went immediately to the pulpit and preached upon 1 Peter i. 15. "But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." On this occasion we are informed, he was so remarkably helped, that all acknowledged that God was with him of a truth. And the people of the parish who had come to hear their own minister, a truly pious and excellent man, were so surprised and taken with him, as if God, besides his ordinary resident, (so Mr. M'Ward expresses it) had sent them an extraordinary ambassador to negotiate a peace between God and them, and a prompt paranymph unto, and a skilful suitor of a spouse for Jesus Christ the blessed Bridegroom, that he might present them as a chaste virgin to this divine husband.

The period at which Mr. Binning was engaged in the full exercise of his ministry was one of great agitation and trouble both in church and state. The English sectarians under Oliver Cromwell had gained a complete ascendancy in the southern part of the island; and, having overthrown the Presbyterian interest there, were proceeding to make various attempts on the constitution and discipline of the Church of Scotland. Cromwell himself had entered Scotland, and after the rout at Dunbar, in a very short period succeeded in effectually prostrating the royalist party in that country. The state of public affairs, both ecclesiastical and civil, was such as led to many conferences and discussions among the clergy, and it appears that Mr. Binning, although a very young man, was called upon to take even a prominent share in these. Baillie, in

his letters,* plainly intimates this fact, and that in a way which shows that it was sometimes little to his satisfaction. "The next presbytery day," says he, "when I am absent, Mr. Patrick (Gillespie) causes read again the commissioner's letter, and had led it so, that by the elders' votes, the men of greatest experience and wisdom of our presbytery were the two youngest we had, Mr. Hugh Binning and Mr. Andrew Morton. Then, when it was pressed that I might be but added to them, it was by a vote refused." Again, "Mr. Patrick and Mr. James Guthrie, wherever they came, uttered their passion. I heard one who had married Mr. Patrick's sister's daughter report to Mr. Douglas, that Mr. Hugh Binning, with Mr. Patrick, in Kirkaldy, had spoke like a distracted man, saying to Mr. Douglas's own wife, and the young man himself, and his mother-in-law, Mr. Patrick's sister, 'That the Commission of the Kirk would approve nothing that was right; that a hypocrite ought not to reign over us; that we ought to treat with Cromwell, and give him security not to trouble England with a king; and whoever marred this treaty, the blood of the slain in this quarrel should be on their heads!' strange words," he adds, "if true." We are also informed† that, on one occasion, a public disputation took place between the Presbyterians and Independents, in or about Glasgow, and in the presence of the Protector himself. Our author being present at this disputation, so managed the controverted points as not only to nonplus Cromwell's ministers, but to cover them with shame. This

* Vol. ii. p. 360, 363.

† Howie's Scots Worthies, p. 169.

made Oliver ask the name of so bold and learned a young man; and being informed that it was Mr. Hugh Binning, he replied, "he hath bound well indeed; but" added, clapping his hand on his sword, "this will loose all again." Frequent references are to be found in our author's writings to the dangers and distractions of the times, and the great difficulties with which the church was called upon to struggle. Thus, in a sermon preached on a day of public humiliation, he says, "What, if the Lord hath defaced all that this kingdom was instrumental in building up in England, that he alone may have the glory in a second temple more glorious!" And when he observed that the zeal of many for the Solemn League and Covenant, by which they were sworn to endeavour the preservation of the reformed religion in Scotland, and the reformation of religion in the kingdom of England and Ireland, was not attended with a suitable amendment of their own lives, he takes up a bitter lamentation over them in the following remarkable sentence:—"Alas! we deceive ourselves with the noise of a covenant, and a cause of God. We cry it up as an antidote against all evils, use it as a charm, even as the Jews did their temple; and in the meantime we do not care how we walk before God, or with our neighbours. Well, 'thus saith the Lord, trust ye not in lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt,' Jer. vii. 4, 5, 6 If drunkenness reign among you, if filthiness.

swearing, oppression, cruelty, reign among you, your covenant is but a lie, all your professions are but lying words, and shall never keep you in your inheritances and dwellings. The Lord tells you what he requires of you; is it not, 'to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God?' Mic. vi. 8. This is that which 'the grace of God teaches, to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly' towards God, your neighbour, and yourself, Tit. ii. 11, 12; and this he prefers to your public ordinances, your fasting, covenanting, preaching, and such like.

After he had laboured four years in the ministry, he died of a consumption, in 1653, in the twenty-sixth year of his age. The last sermons he preached were those on Rom. viii. 14, 15. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." He concluded the last of these discourses, with a reflection on these words, "we cry Abba, Father. "This," says he, "is much for our comfort, that from whomsoever and whatsoever corner in the world prayers come up to him, they cannot want acceptance. All languages, all countries, all places are sanctified by Jesus Christ, that whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord from the ends of the earth, shall be saved. And truly it is a sweet meditation to think, that from the ends of the earth, the cries of souls are heard, and that the end is as near heaven as the middle, and a wilderness as near as a paradise;—that though we understand not one another, yet we have one loving and living Father, that understands all our meanings; and so the different languages and dialects of the members

of this body make no confusion in heaven, but meet together in his heart and affection, and are as one perfume, one incense sent up from the whole catholic church, which is here scattered upon the earth : O that the Lord would persuade us to cry this way to our Father in all our necessities." Thus having contemplated that subject concerning the adoption of children, he was taken hence to the enjoyment of the inheritance reserved in the heavens for them, and the Spirit called him by death, as the voice did John the divine, Rev. iv. 1. " Come up hither."

He was buried in the church-yard of Govan, where, as we are informed, Mr. Patrick Gillespie, then principal of the university of Glasgow, at his own proper charges, caused a monument to be erected for him, on which there is to this day the following inscription in Latin. The marble tablet containing the inscription, is now fixed in the wall within the lobby of the church of Govan.

HIC SITUS EST MAGISTER HUGO BINNINGCUS ;
VIR PIETATE, FACUNDIA, DOCTRINA CLARUS;
PHILOLOGUS, PHILOSOPHUS, THEOLOGUS PRÆSTANS,
PRÆCO DENIQUE EVANGELII FIDELIS ET EXIMIUS ;
QUI E MEDIO RERUM CURSU SUBLATUS,
ANNO ÆTATIS XXVI. DOM. AUTEM 1653.
MUTAVIT PATRIAM NON SOCIETATEM,
EO QUOD VIVUS CUM DEO AMBULAVIT
ET SI QUID ULTRA INQUIRAS, CÆTERA SILEO;
CUM NEC TU NEC MARMOR HOC CAPIAT.

He left behind him an only son called John, who, after his grandfather's death, inherited the estate of Dalvennan. John however was engaged in the insurrection at Bothwell Bridge, A. D. 1679, and in con-

sequence the estate was forfeited. He continued dispossessed of it till the year 1690, when, by Act of Parliament, the forfeitures and fines passed from the year 1665 to the 5th day of November 1688, were rescinded, and a prospect was afforded of its being restored to its former owner. John, however, reaped no benefit from this enactment. His name indeed appears in the list of those whose forfeitures were rescinded, but another had been for years in possession of his property, and had procured a special act of Parliament vesting it in himself, notwithstanding of this repeal of Binning's forfeiture.* It appears from various Acts of the General Assembly, from the year 1704 to 1710, that this John had afterwards sunk into great poverty, and that this circumstance, taken in connection with his parentage, and also perhaps the cause of his forfeiture, had so far awakened the sympathies of the church, that a general collection was repeatedly ordered for his behoof. In the Index to the unprinted Acts of Assembly 1704, Sess. 11, we find the following sentence, "Recommendation to all the presbyteries within the kingdom in favours of John Binning, son to Mr. Hugh Binning, minister at Govan, for some charitable supply, and for sending in the same to Mr. James Hart, one of the ministers of Edinburgh;"† in the Index to the Acts of 1705, there is a "Recommendation in favours of Mr. John Binning, desiring the contributions allowed him by the late Assembly, may be sent in to Mr. James Hart, according to a former Act thereanent;" in the Index to the Acts of 1707, Sess. 13, and ult.

* Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, Vol. viii. pp. 564—575. Vol. ix. pp. 162, 165.

† This article also contains a "Recommendation concerning the printing of Mr. Hugh Binning's works."

there is a "Recommendation in favours of John Binning, son of Mr. Hugh Binning, for charity;" and in 1710, an "Act for a collection for John Binning, son of Mr. Hugh Binning, minister at Govan," May 9, 1710, Sess. 12.

Our author also left behind him a widow, who was afterwards married to Mr. James Gordon, a Presbyterian minister, for some time in Ireland. She lived to a great age, and died in the year 1694 at Paisley; and was buried, by the parishioners of Govan, beside her deceased husband. Mr. Binning was succeeded in his charge by Mr. David Veitch, who likewise died young.

All Mr. Binning's Works that are extant were published after his death. The first which was printed is entitled "The Common principles of the Christian religion clearly proved, and singularly improved; or a Practical Catechism, wherein some of the most concerning foundations of our faith are solidly laid down; and that doctrine which is according to godliness is sweetly yet pungently pressed home, and most satisfyingly handled." Mr. M'Ward, speaking of this performance, says; that it was not designed for the press: that it contained only his notes on those subjects he preached to his flock, and which he wrote out for the private use and edification of a friend. This book is an excellent exposition of the Westminster Catechism so far as it goes, viz. to the twenty-first question, "Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?" Mr. Patrick Gillespie writes a preface to the reader, in which he expresses his high opinion of it in the following encomium:—"In this book Mr. Binning explains many of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and had he lived to have perfected and finished this work,

he had been upon this single account famous in the Church of Christ." This book was so greatly esteemed in this country, that before the year 1718, no less than five impressions had issued from the press; and all these being sold off, a sixth was made in the said year. As they were much valued at home, so they were highly prized abroad; and as an evidence of this, it may be mentioned that they were translated into the Dutch language, by Mr. James Coleman, minister at Sluys in Flanders.

In the year 1670, another posthumous work was printed. It is entitled, 'The Sinner's Sanctuary, being forty sermons upon the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, from the first verse down to the sixteenth.' The publishers in their preface, acquaint us, that they were encouraged to print it, because the former treatise was universally approved of by the intelligent and judicious in the principles of the Christian faith. In this book, as in all his other writings, the readers will perceive a pure stream of piety and learning running through the whole, and a very peculiar turn of thought, that exceeds the common rate of writers on this choice part of the holy Scriptures.

A third treatise was printed at Edinburgh, in the year 1671. The title of it is, "Fellowship with God, being twenty-eight sermons on the first Epistle of John, chap. 1st, and chap. 2d, verses 1, 2, 3." In this book we have the true ground and foundation of attaining, the spiritual way of entertaining fellowship with the Father and the Son, and the blessed condition of such as attain to it, most succinctly and distinctly explained. This book was revised and published by one A. S. who, in his preface to the reader, styles himself,

his servant in the gospel of our dearest Lord and Saviour. No other commendation of it need be given than the summary eulogium which that minister has left us :— "In a word," says he "here are to be found, convictions for atheists, piercing rebukes to the profane, clear instructions to the ignorant, milk to the babes in Christ, strong meat for the strong, strength to the weak, quickening and reviving for such as faint in the way, restoratives for such as are in a decay, reclamations and loud oyesses after backsliders to recal them, breasts of consolation for Zion's mourners ; and, to add no more, here are most excellent counsels and directions to serious seekers of fellowship with God, to guide them in their way and help them forward to the attainment of that fulness of joy which is to be had in fellowship with the Father and the Son."

Another treatise that has been printed is, his "Heart Humiliation or Miscellany Sermons, preached upon some choice texts at several solemn occasions." These were also revised and published by the above A.S. Mr. Binning considering the great confusions and lamentable divisions that prevailed in the church in his day, and the abounding immorality and profaneness of the age, was deeply affected therewith. His righteous soul was so vexed and grieved on these accounts, that he declared his mind in a most pathetic and moving manner, when the days of public humiliation and fasting were observed. With respect to the many fasts then appointed, he says in his sermon on Isa. lxiv. 7, "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee," and again, "The fasting days of Scotland will be numbered in the roll of greatest provocations, because there is no real conviction of sin among

us; custom now hath taken away the solemnity, and there remaineth nothing but the very name." And again, in the same sermon, "Doth any of you pray more in private than ye used? Or what edge is upon your prayers? Alas! the Lord will get good leave to go from us. It feareth me we would give Christ a testimonial to go over seas. Hold him, hold him; nay, the multitude would be gladly quit of him; they cannot abide his yoke, his work is a burden, his word is a torment, his discipline is bands and cords, and what heart can ye have to keep Christ? What violence can you offer to Christ to hold him still? All your intreaties may be fair compliments, but they would never rend his garment."

When the unhappy differences arose betwixt the parties in the Church known by the names of the Public Resolutioners and Protesters, Binning adopted the principles and advocated the cause of the latter denomination. This distinction proved to be attended with fatal consequences. He saw some of the evils of it in his own time; and being of a catholic and healing spirit, with a view to the cementing of differences, he wrote an excellent Treatise of Christian Love, apparently with the view of publication; a century however elapsed before it was committed to the press. It will be reprinted in the present Edition of his Works.

A small volume was published in 1760, containing several additional sermons, which will also be reprinted in this edition. The name of the editor of that volume is not mentioned, but he states in the preface, underneath which is the word "Brousterland," that there were in his possession, several other discourses by Binning in a state fit for publication. None of these however seem to have since seen the light.

There is a Pamphlet in quarto, consisting of fifty-one pages, which is still to be met with, bearing his name, and entitled, "An Useful Case of Conscience, learnedly and accurately discussed and resolved, concerning associations and confederacies with idolaters, infidels, heretics, malignants, or any other known enemies of truth and godliness." There is sufficient evidence however for proving that it was not written by Mr. Binning. Binning died in the year 1653, and this pamphlet was not published till 1693; so that for no less a period than forty years it was never heard of, nor published by any of the Protesters themselves, which could scarcely have happened had it been known that any such treatise existed. Moreover, while no evidence whatever is produced that Binning was its author, nay, while presumptive evidence against its authenticity is afforded by the circumstance that neither publisher nor printer's name is subjoined, nor even the place of publication, its contents and language seem to be at variance with both the character and sentiments of Binning, as exhibited in his genuine productions, and more especially in his Treatise of Christian Love.

The Memoir of Binning's Life to which reference has already been made, and from which a large proportion of the above particulars is taken, contains an elaborate and highly coloured delineation of his character, both as a private Christian, and as a scholar and minister of the Gospel. "He was," it informs us, "considering his age, a prodigy of learning; for before he had arrived at the 26th year of his life, he had such a large stock of useful knowledge, as to be *philologus*, *philosophus*, and *theologus eximius*; and might well have been an ornament in the most famous and flourishing university in Europe. This was the more as-

tonishing, if we consider his weakness and infirmity of body, not being able to read much at one time, or to undergo the fatigue of assiduous study. But this was well supplied, partly by a memory that retained every thing he heard or read, and partly by a solid penetrating judgment, whereby he digested it well, and made it his own : so that with a singular dexterity, he could bring it forth seasonably, and communicate it to the use and advantage of others, drained from the dregs he found about it, or intermixed with it, insomuch that his knowledge seemed rather to be born with him, than to have been acquired by hard and laborious study.

" He and some young ministers in the same presbytery, who had been students of divinity when he was professor of philosophy, did keep private meetings for Christian fellowship, and their mutual improvement ; but finding that he was in danger of being puffed up with the high opinion they had of him, he broke up these meetings, though he still kept up a brotherly correspondence with them, for the vigorous prosecution of their ministerial work. He studied to be clothed with humility, and to hide his attainments under that veil. Though he wanted not matter and words wherewith to please and profit all his hearers, yet at every thought of his appearing in public to speak of God and Christ to men, his soul was filled with a holy tremor, which he vented by saying, Ah, Lord ! I am a child, and cannot speak ; teach me what I shall say of thee, who cannot order my speech by reason of darkness.

" He was a great student in the books of creation and providence, and took much pleasure in meditating upon what is written in these volumes. The wonders he discovered in both, led him up to the infinitely wise and powerful Maker and Preserver of all things. Once,

when he came to visit a gentleman of good learning, and his intimate acquaintance, the gentleman took him to his garden, and in their walk he discoursed with him, to his great surprise, of the objective declarations which every thing makes of its Almighty Creator, and talked of the wisdom and goodness of God, particularly in clothing the earth with a green garb, rather than with a garment of any other colour; and having plucked a flower from it, he made a most savoury spiritual discourse; he so dissected and anatomized the same, as to set forth the glorious perfections of its Maker, in a most taking and entertaining manner.

"But the main object of his pious and devout contemplations was God in Christ reconciling the world to himself: For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, had shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; so that he not only understood the mysteries of the kingdom of God himself, but it was given to him to make others know them. His preaching was in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. His sermons are the very transcript of what had passed betwixt God and his own soul; he spoke and wrote his experimental knowledge, and did both speak and write because he believed. He did constantly contend for the articles of faith and truths of religion, and could never think of parting with one hoof, or the least grain of truth; being persuaded, that Christian concord must have truth for its foundation, and holiness for its attendant, without which it will decline into a defection, and degenerate into a conspiracy against religion. As to the duties of Christianity, he enforced the performance of these with all the arguments of persuasion; so that, through the

blessing of God, his pulpit discourses became the power of God to the illumination of the understandings of his hearers, the renovation of their natures, the reformation of their lives, and the salvation of their souls.

" The difficult part of a reprover he acted in the most prudent and gaining manner. When he did lick with his tongue the mote out of his brother's eye, he did it with all tenderness, and with the tear in his own. His words wanted neither point nor edge for drawing of blood, when the case of the offender made it an indispensable duty ; and when he was necessitated to use sharpness with any, they were convinced that he honestly and sincerely intended their spiritual good. His compassion on the ignorant, and them that were out of the way, made it evident, how much he considered himself as encompassed with infirmities, and so within the hazard of being tempted.

" He was a person of exemplary moderation and sobriety of spirit, had healing methods much at heart, and studied to promote love and peace among his brethren in the ministry. He vigorously contributed to the recovery of the humanity of Christianity, which had been much lost in the differences of the times, and the animosities which followed thereupon. These virtues and graces had such an ascendant in his soul, that when he carried coals about with him taken to warm the souls of all with whom he conversed with love to God, his truths, interests, and people, so he carried sanctuary water about with him to cool and extinguish what undue passion he perceived to accompany the zeal of good and well-designing persons ; a temper that is rarely found in one of his age. But ripe harvest grapes were found upon this vine in the beginning of spring ;

and no wonder, since he lived so near the Sun of Righteousness, and lay under the plentiful showers of divine grace, and the ripening influences of the Holy Spirit."

"He died," the memoir continues, "when he was scarce come to the prime and vigour of life, entering on the twenty-sixth year of his age, leaving behind him a sweet savour after he was gone, and an epistle of commendation upon the hearts of his hearers. While he lived, he was highly valued and esteemed, having been a successful instrument of saving himself and them that heard him, of turning sinners unto righteousness, and of perfecting the saints; and died much lamented by all good people who had the opportunity and advantage of knowing him. He was a person of singular piety, of a humble, meek, and peaceable temper, a judicious and lively preacher; nay, so extraordinary a person, that he was justly accounted a prodigy for the pregnancy of his natural parts, and his great proficiency in human learning, and knowledge of divinity. He was too shining a light to shine long, and burned so intensely that he was soon put out; but now shines in the kingdom of his Father in a more conspicuous and refulgent manner, even as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever."

"Mr. Hugh Binning," says Wodrow,* "was a man of very great piety and eminent learning. I heard old Mr. Simpson say, that when they were seeking to get old Principal Strang out of the college, the Principal said, 'ye are seeking to get me out of my place, and whom have ye to fill my room? I know no one, unless it be a young man newly come out of the school, viz. Mr. Hugh Binning.' He was truly

* Analecta, MS. vol. iv. p. 171.

more fitted for an university than for a country congregation. He followed much Mr. Leighton's way of preaching, which made him less useful to the common people of Govan. Mr. R. Muir of Kilbride told me that Mr. Ralph Rodger told him, that Mr. H. Binning, at his death, did very much regret to him his taking such a way of preaching, and said, if he had lived, he was resolved to have followed that way of preaching by doctrines, reasons, and uses, which he declared he was then best pleased with. Speaking of human learning, and if he had lived, it is thought that he had been one of the greatest schoolmen of his time, he said, he did value more one line of the word of God than all the human learning in the world."

As a preacher, Binning was certainly greatly in advance of the age at which he lived. We find in him a clearness and force of argument, an elegance of expression, and a richness and felicity of illustration, much more akin to the polished oratory of modern times, than to the homely expositions of those early days. But it is not merely for the graces of style, or even the closeness and power of reasoning, that his works are commended to the notice of every Christian reader. His skill in describing the great malady under which human nature has sunk, and in applying the great remedy provided in the gospel; his felicitous and affecting manner of unfolding the most precious evangelical truths; and his tender and pathetic appeals, cannot fail to interest and impress every mind. He instructed and edified the age in which he lived; and his works have continued to be read and deeply relished ever since. "There is no speaking," says Durham, "after Mr. Binning; truly he had the tongue of the learned, and knew how to speak a word in season."

THE

COMMON PRINCIPLES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

CLEARLY PROVED, AND SINGULARLY IMPROVED.

OR,

A PRACTICAL CATECHISM.

TO THE READER.

Christian Reader,—The holy and learned author of this little book, having out-run his years, hastened to a maturity before the ordinary season, insomuch that ripe summer fruit was found with him by the first of the spring: for before he had lived twenty-five years complete, he had got to be *Philologus, Philosophus, Theologus eximius,* whereof he gave suitable proofs, by his labours, having first professed in philosophy three years, with high approbation, in the university of Glasgow, and thence was translated to the ministry of the gospel in a congregation adjacent, where he laboured in the work of the gospel near four years, leaving an epistle of commendation upon the hearts of his hearers: but as few burning and shining lights have been of long continuance here, so he (after he had served his own generation by the will of God, and many had rejoiced in his light for a season) was quickly transported to the land of promise, in the 26th year of his age. He lived deservedly esteemed and beloved, and died much lamented, by all discerning Christians who knew

him. And, indeed, the loss which the Church of Christ, in these parts, sustained in his death, was the greater upno a double account: first, that he was a person fitted with dexterity to vindicate school-divinity, and practical Theology, from the superfluity of vain and fruitless perplexing questions, wherewith latter times have corrupted both, and had it upon his spirit, in all his way, to reduce that native gospel-simplicity, which, in most parts of the world where literature is in esteem, and where the gospel is preached, is almost exiled from the school and from the pulpit,—a specimen whereof the judicious reader may find in this little treatise. Besides, he was a person of eminent moderation and sobriety of spirit, (a rare grace in this generation), whose heart was much drawn forth in the study of healing ways, and condescensions of love among brethren; one who longed for the recovering of the *humanity of Christianity*, which hath been well near lost in the bitter divisions of these times, and the animosities which have followed thereupon.

That which gave the rise to the publishing of this part of his manuscripts, was partly the longing of many who knew him after some fruit of his labours, for the use of the church; and partly the exceeding great usefulness of the treatise, wherein, I am bold to say, that some fundamentals of the Christian religion, and great mysteries of faith, are handled with the greatest gospel-simplicity, and most dexterous plainness; and are brought down to the meanest capacity, and vulgar understanding, with abundant evidences of a great height and reach of useful knowledge in the author; who, had he lived to have perfected the explication of the grounds of religion in this manner, as he intended, in his opening the Catechism unto his particular congregation; he had been, upon his single account, famous in the churches of Christ: but now, by this

imperfect *opus posthumum*, thou art left to judge *ex ungue leonem*.

The author's method was his peculiar gift, who, being no stranger to the rules of art, knew well how to make this method subserve the matter which he handled; for, though he tells not always that this discourse hath so many parts, thou mayest not think it wants method, it being *maximum artis celare artem*. That the same spirit, which enabled him to conceive, and communicate to others, these sweet mysteries of salvation, may help thee with profit to read and peruse them, is the desire of him who is,

Thine in the service of the Gospel,

PATRICK GILLESPIE.

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

THE COMMON PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, CLEARLY PROVED.

I.

GOD'S GLORY THE CHIEF END OF MAN'S BEING.

Rom. xi. 36.—Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. And, 1 Cor. x. 31.—Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

All that men have to know, may be comprised under these two heads,—What their end is, and what is the right way to attain to that end: And all that we have to do, is, by any means to seek to compass that end. These are the two cardinal points of a man's knowledge and exercise; *Quo, et qua eundum est*,—whither to go, and what way to go. If there be a mistake in any of these fundamentals, all is wrong. All arts and sciences have their principles and grounds, that must be presupposed to all solid knowledge and right practice; so hath the true religion some fundamental principles, which must be laid to heart, and imprinted into the soul, or there can be no superstructure of true and saving knowledge, and no practice in Christianity that can lead to a blessed end. But as the principles are not many, but a few common and easy grounds, from which all the conclusions of art

are reduced; so the principles of true religion are few and plain. They need neither burden your memory, nor confound your understanding. That which may save you is nigh thee, says the apostle, Rom. x. even in thy mouth. It is neither too far above us, nor too far below us. But, alas! your not considering of those common, and few and easy grounds, makes them both burdensome to the memory, and dark to the understanding. As there is nothing so easy, but it becomes difficult, if you do it against your will, *nihil est tam facile, quin difficile fiat, si invitus feceris* —so there is nothing so plain, so common, but it becomes dark and hard, if you do not indeed consider it, and lay it to heart.

That which is, in the *first place,* to be considered is, Our end. As in all other arts, and every petty business, it hath the first place of consideration, so especially in the Christian religion. It is the first cause of all human actions, and the first principle of all deliberate motions. Except you would walk at random, not knowing whither you go, or what you do, you must once establish this and fix it in your intention, what is the great end and purpose wherefore I am created, and sent into the world; if this be not either questioned, or not rightly constituted, you cannot but spend your time, *Vel nihil agendo, vel aliud agendo, vel male agendo,* you must either do nothing, or nothing to purpose, or, that which is worse, that which will undo you. It is certainly the wrong establishing of this one thing, that makes the most part of our motions either altogether irregular, or unprofitable, or destructive and hurtful: Therefore, as this point hath the first place in your catechism, so it ought to be first of all laid to heart, and pondered as the one necessary thing. "One thing is needful," says Christ, Luke x. 42; and if anything be in a superlative degree needful, this is it. O that you would choose to consider it, as the necessity and weight of it require.

We have read two scriptures, which speak to the ultimate and chief end of man, which is the glorifying of

God by all our actions, and words, and thoughts. In which we have these things of importance: 1. That God's glory is the end of our being. 2. That God's glory should be the end of our doing. And, 3. The ground of both these, because both being and doing are from him, therefore they ought to be both for him. He is the first cause of both, and therefore he ought to be the last end of both. "Of him, and through him, are all things," and therefore all things are also for him, and therefore all things should be done to him.

God is independent altogether, and self-sufficient. This is his royal prerogative, wherein he infinitely transcends all created perfection. "He is of himself, and for himself," from no other, and for no other, "but of him, and for him are all things." He is the fountain-head; you ought to follow the streams up to it, and then to rest: for you can go no farther. But the creature, even the most perfect work, besides God, it hath these two ingredients of limitation and imperfection in its bosom: It is from another and for another. It hath its rise out of the fountain of God's immense power and goodness, and it must run towards that again, till it empty all its faculties and excellencies, into that same sea of goodness. Dependence is the proper notion of a created being, dependence upon that infinite independent Being, as the first immediate cause, and the last immediate end. You see then, that this principle is engraven in the very nature of man. It is as certain and evident, that man is made for God's glory, and for no other end, as that he is from God's power, and from no other cause. Except men do violate their own conscience, and put out their own eyes as the Gentiles did, Rom. i. 19, &c., "that which might be known" of man's chief end, "is manifest in them, so that all men are without excuse." As God's being is independent, so that he cannot be expressed by any name, more suitable than such as he takes to himself, "I am that I am;" importing a boundless, ineffable, absolute, and transcendent being, beside which, no creature de-

serves so much as to have the name of being, or to be made mention of in one day with his name, because his glorious light makes the poor derived shadow of light in other creatures, to disappear, and to evanish out of the world of beings: so it is the glorious perfection of his nature, that he doth all things for himself, for his own name, Prov. xvi. 4, and his glory is as dear to him, as himself. Isa. xlii. 8, "I am the Lord, that is my name, and therefore my glory will I give to no other;" and xlviii. 11. This is no ambition. Indeed, for a man to seek his own glory, or search into it, is not glory, Prov. xxv. 27. but rather a man's shame: Self-seeking in creatures is a monstrous and incongruous thing; it is as absurd, and unbeseeming a creature, to seek its own glory, as to attribute to itself its own being. Shall the thing formed, say to the potter, Thou hast not made me? That were ridiculous: And shall the thing formed, say, 'Tis made for itself? That were as ridiculous. Self-denial is the ornament and beauty of a creature, and therefore humility is an ornament and clothing, 1 Pet. v. 5. And honour upholds the humble spirit, Prov. xxix. 23. But God's self-seeking, and seeking of his own glory, is his eminent excellency. It is indeed his glory, because he is, and there is none else. there is nothing beside him, but that which hath issued forth from his incomprehensible fulness. And therefore it is all the reason of the world, that as he is the beginning, so he should be the end of all things, Rev. i. 8. And there is the more reason of it, that his majesty's seeking of his own glory, is not prejudicial to the creature's good, but the very communication of his fulness goes along with it: So that in glorifying himself, he is most beneficial to his own creatures. Poor creatures, indigent at home, yet are proud of nothing, and endeavour in seeking of themselves, to ingross all perfections into their own bosoms. Ambition, and vain-glory, robs and spoils others' excellencies, to clothe itself withal; and then boasts itself in these borrowed feathers. But our blessed Lord is then doing most for

our advantage, when he does all for his own glory. He needs not go abroad to seek perfection, but to manifest what he is in himself; he communicates of himself to us. O blessed self-seeking, that gave us a being and well-being; that makes no advantage by it, but gives advantage. He hath the honour of all, but we have the profit of all.

"All things are of him, and for him;" but man in a peculiar and proper way. As God, in making of man, was pleased of his goodness to stamp him with a character of his own image; (and in this he puts a difference between man and other creatures, that he should have more plain and distinct engravings of divine majesty upon him, which might shew the glory of the workman;) so it appears that he is in a singular way made for God, as his last end. As he is set nearer God, as the beginning and cause, than other creatures; so he is placed nearer God as the end. All creatures are made *ultimo*, lastly for God, yet they are all made *proxime*, nextly for man. Therefore David falls out a wondering, "O Lord, what is man, that thou magnifiest him, and hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands, and put all things under his feet!" Psal. viii. 6. The creature comes out in a direct line from God, as the beams from the body of the sun; and it is directed towards the use and service of mankind, from whom all the excellency and perfection that is in it should reflect towards God again. Man is both *proxime et ultimo* for God. We are to return immediately to the fountain of our being; and thus our happiness and well-being is perpetuated. There is nothing intervening between God and us, that our use and service and honour should be directed towards: But all the songs and perfections of the creature, that are among the rest of the creatures, meet all in man as their centre, for this purpose, that he may return with them all to the glorious fountain from whence they issued. Thus we stand next God, and in the middle between God and other creatures. This, I say, was the condition of our creation. We

had our being immediately from God, as the beginning of all, and we were to have our happiness and well-being by returning immediately to God as the end of all. But sin coming in between God and us, hath displaced us, so that we cannot now stand next God, without the intervention of a Mediator, and we cannot stand between God and creatures, to offer up their praises to him; but there is one Mediator between God and man, that offers up both man's praises and the creature's songs which meet in man.

Now, seeing God hath made all things for himself, and especially man for his own glory, that he may shew forth in him the glory and excellency of his power, goodness, holiness, justice, and mercy; it is not only most reasonable that man should do all things that he doth to the glory of God, but it is even the beauty and perfection of a man, the greatest accession that can be to his being, to glorify God by that being. We are not our own, therefore we ought not to live to ourselves, but to God whose we are.

But you may ask, what is it to glorify God? Doth our goodness extend to him? Or is it an advantage to the Almighty, that we are righteous? No indeed: And herein is the vast difference between God's glorifying of us, and sanctifying of us, and our glorifying and sanctifying of him. God calls things that are not, and makes them to be; but we can do no more, but call things that are, and that far below what they are. God's glorifying is creative, ours only declarative. He makes us such, we do no more but declare him to be such. This then is the proper work that man is created for, to be a witness of God's glory, and to give testimony to the appearances, and out-breakings of it, in the ways of power, and justice, and mercy, and truth. Other creatures are called to glorify God, but it is rather a proclamation to dull and senseless men, and a provocation of them to their duty. As Christ said to the Pharisees, "if these children hold their peace, the stones would cry out;" so may the Lord turn himself from stupid and senseless man, to the stones, and woods,

and seas, and sun, and moon, and exhort them to man's duty, the more to provoke and stir up our dulness, and to make us consider, that it is a greater wonder, that man whom God hath made so glorious, can so little express God's glory; than if stupid and senseless creatures should break out in singing, and praising of his majesty. The creatures are the books wherein the lines of the song of God's praises are written, and man is made a creature capable to read them, and to tune that song. They are appointed to bring in brick to our hand, and God has fashioned us for this employment, to make such a building of it. We are the mouth of the creation, but ere God want praises when our mouth is dumb, and our ears deaf, God will open the mouths of asses, of babes and sucklings, and in them perfect praises, Psal. viii. 1, 2. Epictetus said well, *Si Luscinia essem, canerem ut Luscinia: cum autem homo sim, quid agam? Laudabo Deum, nec unquam cessabo*—If I were a lark, I would sing as a lark; but seeing I am a man, what should I do, but praise God without ceasing. It is as proper to us to praise God, as for a bird to chaunt. All beasts have their own sounds, and voices peculiar to their own nature; this is the natural sound of a man. Now as you would think it monstrous to hear a melodious bird croaking as a raven; so it is no less monstrous and degenerate, to hear the most part of the discourses of men, savouring nothing of God. If we had known that innocent estate of man, O how would we think he had fallen from heaven! We would imagine that we were thrust down from heaven, where we heard the melodious songs of angels, into hell, to hear the howlings of damned spirits. This then is that we are bound unto, by the bond of our creation; this is our proper office and station God once set us into, when he assigned every creature its own use and exercise. This was our portion, (and O the noblest of all, because nearest the King's own person,)to acknowledge in our hearts inwardly, and to express in our words and actions outwardly, what a One he is, according as he hath revealed himself

in his word, and works. 'Tis great honour to a creature to have the meanest employment in the court of this great King; but, O, what is it to be set over all the King's house, and over all his kingdom? But, then, what is that, in respect of this, to be next to the King, to wait on his own person, so to speak. Therefore the godly man is described as a waiting-maid, or servant, Psal. cxxiii. 2.

Well then, without more discourse upon it, without multiplying of it into particular branches; to glorify God "is in our souls to conceive of him, and meditate on his name, till they receive the impression and stamp of all the letters of his glorious name; and then to express this in our words and actions, in commending of him, and obey-of him." Our soul should be as wax to express the seal of his glorious attributes of justice, power, goodness, holiness, and mercy: and as the water that receives the beams of the sun, reflects them back again, so should our spirits receive the sweet warming beams of his love and glorious excellency, and then reflect them towards his Majesty, with the desires and affections of our souls. All our thoughts of him, all our affections towards him, should have the stamp of singularity, such as may declare there is none like him, none besides him; our love, our meditation, our acknowledgment should have this character on their front, "there is none besides thee;" thou art, and none else. And then a soul should, by the cords of affection to him, and admiration of him, be bound to serve him. Creation puts on the obligation to glorify him in our body and spirits, which are his; but affection only puts that to exercise. All other bonds leave our natures at liberty, but this constrains, 2 Cor. v. 14. it binds on all bonds, it ties on us all divine obligations. Then a soul will glorify God, when love so unites it to God, and makes it one spirit with him, that his glory becomes its honour, and becomes the principle of all our inward affections, and outward actions. It is not always possible to have and express particular thoughts of God, and his glory, in every action, and meditation; but, for the most part it

ought to be so: And if souls were accustomed to meditation on God, it would become their very nature, *altera natura*—pleasant and delightsome. However, if there be not always an express intention of God's glory, yet there ought to be kept always such a disposition and temper of spirit, as it may be construed to proceed from the intention of God's glory; and then it remains in the seed and fruit, if not in itself.

Now when we are speaking of the great end and purpose of our creation, we call to mind our lamentable and tragical fall from that blessed station we were constitute into. "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom. iii. 23. His being in the world was for that glory, and he is come short of that glory. O strange shortcoming! Short of all that he was ordained for! What is he now meet for? For what purpose is that chief of the works of God now? The salt, if it lose its saltness, is meet for nothing, for wherewithal shall it be seasoned? Mark ix. 50. Even so, when man is rendered unfit for his proper end, he is meet for nothing, but to be cast out and trode upon; he is like a withered branch that must be cast into the fire, John xv. 6. Some things, if they fail in one use, they are good for another; but the best things are not so, *Corruptio optimi, pessima.* As the Lord speaks to the house of Israel, "Shall wood be taken off the vine tree for any work? Even so the inhabitants of Jerusalem," Ezek. xv. 2, 3, 4, 5. If it yield not wine, it is good for nothing. So, if man do not glorify God,—if he fall from that, he is meet for nothing, but to be cast into the fire of hell, and burnt for ever; he is for no use in the creation, but to be fuel to the fire of the Lord's indignation.

But behold! the goodness of the Lord and his kindness and love hath appeared toward man, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us through Jesus Christ," Tit. iii. 4, 5. Our Lord Jesus, by whom all things were created, and for whom, would not let this excellent workmanship perish

so, therefore he goes about the work of redemption,—a second creation more laborious and also more glorious than the first, that so he might glorify his Father and our father. Thus the breach is made up, thus the unsavoury salt is seasoned, thus the withered branch is quickened again for that same fruit of praises and glorifying of God. This is the end of his second creation, as it was of the first; "We are his workmanship created to good works in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 10. This is the work of God, to believe in him, to set to our seal, and to give our testimony to all his attributes, John vi. 29, and iii. 33. We are bought with a price, and therefore we ought to glorify him with our souls and bodies. He made us with a word, and that bound us, but now he has made us again and paid a price for us, and so we are twice bound not to be our own but his, 1 Cor. vi. ult.; "and so to glorify him in our bodies and spirits." I beseech you, gather your spirits, call them home about the business. We once came short of our end, God's glory and our happiness; but know, that it is attainable again. We lost both, but both are found in Christ. Awake then and stir up your spirits, else it shall be double condemnation, when we have the offer of being restored to our former blessed condition, to love our present misery better. Once establish this point within your souls, and therefore ask, why came I hither? To what purpose am I come into the world? If you do not ask it, what will you answer, when he asks you at your appearance before his tribunal? I beseech you what will many of you say in that day ,when the Master returns and takes an account of your dispensation? You are sent into the world only for this business, to serve the Lord: Now what will many of you answer? If you speak the truth (as then you must do it,—you cannot lie then) you must say, Lord, I spent my time in serving my own lusts, I was taken up with other businesses, and had no leisure, I was occupied in my calling, &c. Even as if an ambassador of a king should return him this account of his negociation, I was busy at cards and dice, I spent my money, and did

wear my clothes. Though you think your ploughing, and borrowing, and trafficking, and reaping very necessary, yet certainly these are but as trifles and toys to the main business. O what a dreadful account will souls make! They come here for no purpose but to serve their bodies and senses, to be slaves to all the creatures, which were once put under man's feet: Now man is under the feet of all; and he has put himself so. If you were of these creatures, then you might be for them: You seek them as if you were created for them, and not they for you; and you seek yourselves, as if you were of yourselves, and had not your descent of God. Know, my beloved, that you were not made for that purpose, nor yet redeemed either to serve yourselves, or other creatures, but that other creatures might serve you, and ye serve God, Luke i. 74, 75. And this is really the best way to serve ourselves, and to save ourselves,—to serve God. Self-seeking is self-destroying; self-denying is self-saving, soul-saving. "He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it, and he that denies himself and follows me, is my disciple." Will ye once sit down in good earnest about this business? 'Tis lamentable to be yet to begin to learn to live, when ye must die: Ye will be out of the world almost, ere ye bethink yourself, why came I into the world? *Quidam tunc vivere incipiunt, cum desinendum est; imo quidam ante vivere desierunt quam inciperent;* this is of all most lamentable,—many souls end their life, before they begin to live. For what is our life, but a living death, while we do not live to God, and while we live not in relation to the great end of our life and being,—the glory of God? It were better, says Christ, that such had never been born. You who are created again in Jesus Christ, it most of all concerns you to ask, Why am I made? And why am I redeemed? And to what purpose? It is certainly, that ye may glorify your heavenly Father, Mat. v. 16. Psalm lviii. 13. And you shall glorify him if you bring forth much fruit, and continue in his love, John xv. 8. And this you are

chosen and ordained unto, ver. 16, and therefore abide in him, that ye may bring forth fruit, ver. 4. And if you abide in him by believing, you do indeed honour him; and he that honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father, John v. 23. Here is a compendious way to glorify God. Receive salvation of him freely, righteousness and eternal life, and this sets to a seal to God's truth and grace and mercy: and whoso counts the Son worthy to be a Saviour to them. and sets to their seal of approbation to him whom God the Father hath sent and sealed, he also honours the Father; and then he that honoureth the Father, hath it not for nothing, "for them that honour me I will honour," 1 Sam. ii. 30, says the Lord; and "he that serves me, him will my Father honour," John xii. 26. As the believing soul cares for no other, and respects no other but God, so he respects no other but such a soul. I will dwell in the humble, and look unto the contrite; there are mutual respects and honours. God is the delight of such a soul, and such a soul is God's delight. That soul sets God in a high place, in a throne in its heart, and God sets that soul in a heavenly place with Christ, Eph. ii. 6.; yea he comes down to sit with us, and dwells in us, off his throne of majesty. Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.; lvii. 15.

II.

UNION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD THE END AND DESIGN OF THE GOSPEL.

Psal. lxxiii. 24, to the end.—Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, &c. Whom have I in heaven but thee? &c. It is good for me to draw near to God. 1 John i. 3.—These things declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. John xvii. 21, 22, 23.—That they all may be one as we are one, I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one, &c.

It is a matter of great consolation, that God's glory and our happiness are linked together: So that whoever set

his glory before them singly to aim at, they take the most compendious and certain way to true blessedness. His glory is the ultimate end of man, and should be our great and last scope. But our happiness, which consists in the enjoyment of God, is subordinate to this, yet inseparable from it. The end of our creation is communion and fellowship with God, therefore man was made with an immortal soul capable of it; and this is the greatest dignity and eminency of man above the creatures. He hath not only impressed from God's finger, in his first moulding, some characters resembling God, in righteousness and holiness; but is created with a capacity of receiving more of God, by communion with him. Other creatures have already all they will have, all they can have, of conformity to him; but man is made liker than all, and is fitted and fashioned to aspire to more likeness and conformity, so that his soul may shine more and more to the perfect day.

There was an union made already in his first moulding, and communion was to grow as a fragrant and sweet fruit out of this blessed root. Union and similitude is the ground of fellowship and communion. That union was gracious, that communion would have been glorious; for grace is the seed of glory. There was a two-fold union between Adam and God, an union of state, and an union of nature: He was like God, and he was God's friend. All the creatures had some likeness to God, some engravings of his power, and goodness, and wisdom: but man is said to be made according to God's image, "Let us make man like unto us." Other creatures had *similitudinem vestigii*, but man had *similitudinem faciei*. Holiness and righteousness is God's face, the very excellency and glory of all his attributes; and the Lord stamps the image of these upon man. Other attributes are but like his back parts; and he leaves the resemblance of his footsteps upon other creatures. What can be so beautiful as the image of God upon the soul? Creatures, the nearer they are to God, the more pure and excellent. We see in the fabric

of the world, bodies the higher they are, the more pure and cleanly, the more beautiful. Now then, what was man that was made a little lower than the angels?—in the Hebrew, a little "lower than God," *tantum non deus.* Seeing man is set next to God, his glory and beauty certainly surpasses the glory of the sun and of the heavens. Things contiguous and next other are like other. The water is liker air than the earth, therefore it is next the air: The air is liker heaven than water, therefore is it next to it. *Omne contiguum spirituali, est spirituale.* Angels and men next to God, are spirits, as he is a spirit. Now similitude is the ground of friendship. *Pares paribus congregantur, similitudo necessitudinis vinculum.* It is that which conciliates affections among men: So it is here by proportion. God sees all is very good, and that man is best of his works; and he loves him, and makes him his friend, for his own image which he beholds in him.

At length from these two roots this pleasant and fragrant fruit of communion with, and enjoyment of God, grows up. This is the entertainment of friends, to delight in one another, and to enjoy one another, *amicorum omnia communia.* Love makes all common. It opens the treasure of God's fulness, and makes a vent of divine bounty towards man, and it opens the heart of man, and makes it large as the sand of the sea to receive of God. Our receiving of his fulness, is all the entertainment we can give him. O what blessedness is this, for a soul to live in him; and it lives in him when it loves him, *anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat;* and to taste of his sweetness and be satisfied with him, this makes perfect oneness: and perfect oneness with God (who is the fountain of life, and in whose favour is life) is perfect blessedness.

But we must stand a little here and consider our misery, that have fallen from such an excellency. How are we come down from heaven wonderfully? Sin has interposed between God and man, and this dissolves the union, and hinders the communion. An enemy has come be-

tween two friends, and puts them at odds; and oh! an eternal odds. Sin hath sown this discord, and alienated our hearts from God. Man's glory consisted in the irradiation of the soul from God's shining countenance; this made him light, God's face shined on him. But sin interposing, has eclipsed that light and brought on an eternal night of darkness over the soul. And thus we are spoiled of the image of God, as when the earth comes between the sun and the moon. Now then, there can no beams of divine favour and love break through directly towards us, because of the cloud of our sins, that separates between God and us, and because of the partition wall of ordinances, and the hand-writing which was against us, —God's holy law, and severe justice, Col. iii. 14.

Then, what shall we do? How shall we see his face in joy? Certainly it had been altogether impossible, if our Lord Jesus Christ had not come, who is the light and life of men. The Father shines on him, and the beams of his love reflect upon us, from the Son, The love of God, and his favourable countenance, that cannot meet with us in a direct and immediate beam, they fall on us in this blessed compass, by the intervention of a mediator. We are rebels, standing at distance from God, Christ comes between, a mediator and a peace-maker, to reconcile us to God: "God is in Christ reconciling the world." God first makes an union of natures with Christ, and so he comes near to us, down to us, who could not come up to him; and then he sends out the word of reconciliation,— the gospel, the tenor whereof is this, 1 John i. 3. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with the Father and his Son." It is a voice of peace and invitation to the fellowship of God. Behold then, the happiness of man is the very end and purpose of the gospel. Christ is the repairer of the breaches; the second Adam aspired to quicken what Adam killed. He has slain the enmity, and cancelled the hand-writing that was against us, and so made peace by the blood of his cross; and then, having removed all that out

of the way, he comes and calls us unto the fellowship which we were ordained unto from our creation. We who are rebels, are called to be friends; "I call you not servants, but friends." It is a wonder that the creature should be called a friend of God; but, O great wonder, that the rebel should be called a friend. And yet that is not all, we are called to a nearer union,—to be the sons of God; this is our privilege, John i. 12. This is a great part of our fellowship with the Father, and his Son; we are the Father's children, and the Son's brethren; and if children then heirs, and heirs of God; and if brethren, then co-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17.

Thus the union is begun again in Christ; but as long as sin dwells in our mortal bodies, it is not perfect, there is always some separation, and some enmity in our hearts, and so there is neither full seeing of God (for we know but in part, and we see darkly,) nor full enjoying of God; for we are saved by hope, and we live by faith, and not by sight. But this is begun which is the seed of eternal communion; we are here partakers of the divine nature. Now then it must aspire unto a more perfect union with God whose image it is. And therefore the soul of a believer is here still in motion towards God as his element. There is here an union in affection, but not completed in fruition, *affectu non effectu;* the soul pants after God,—"Whom have I in heaven or earth but thee? My flesh and my heart faileth." A believing soul looks upon God as its only portion, accounts nothing misery but to be separated from him, and nothing blessedness, but to be one with him. This is the load-stone of their affections and desires, the centre which they move towards; and in which they will rest. It is true indeed, that often-times our heart and our flesh faileth us, and we become ignorant and brutish. Our affections cleave to the earth, and temptations with their violence turn our souls towards another end than God. As there is nothing more easily moved and turned wrong than the needle that is touched with the adamant, yet it settles not in such a posture, it

recovers itself and rests never till it look towards the north, and then it is fixed: Even so, temptations and the corruptions and infirmities of our hearts, disturb our spirits easily, and wind them about from the Lord, towards any other thing: But yet we are continuing with him, and he keeps us with his right hand; and therefore though we may be moved, yet we shall not be greatly commoved; we may fall, but we shall rise again. He is the strength of our heart, and therefore he will turn our heart about again, and fix it upon its own portion. Our union here consists more in his holding of us by his power, than our taking hold of him by faith. Power and goodwill encamp about both faith and the soul, "we are kept by his power through faith," 1 Pet. i. And thus he will guide the soul, and still be drawing it nearer to him, from itself, and from sin, and from the world, till he "receive us into glory, and until we be one as with the Father and the Son,—He in us and we in him, that we may be made perfect in one," as it is in the words read.

This is strange, a greater unity and fuller enjoyment, a more perfect fellowship, than ever Adam in his innocency would have been capable of. What soul can conceive it? what tongue express it? None can: For it's that which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into man's heart to conceive." We must suspend the knowledge of it, till we have experience of it. Let us now believe it, and then we, shall find it. There is a mutual inhabitation which is wonderful. Persons that dwell one with another have much society and fellowship, but to dwell one in another is a strange thing, "I in them, and they in me;" and therefore God is often said to dwell in us, and we to dwell in him. But that which makes it of all most wonderful, and incomprehensible, is that glorious unity and communion between the Father and the Son, which it is made an emblem of: "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." Can you conceive that unity of the Trinity? Can you imagine that reciprocal inhabitation, that mutual communion be-

tween the Father and the Son? No: It hath not entered into the heart to conceive it. Only thus much we know, that it is most perfect, it is most glorious; and so much we may apprehend of this unity of the saints with God. O! love is an uniting and transforming thing. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." He dwelleth in us by love, this makes him work in us, and shine upon us. Love hath drawn him down from his seat of majesty, to visit poor cottages of sinners. Isa. lxvi. 1, 2,; xlvii. 15. And it is that love of God reflecting upon our souls, that carries the soul upward to him, to live in him, and walk with him. O how doth it constrain a soul to live to him, and draw it from itself, 2 Cor. v. 15. Then the more unity with God, the more separation from ourselves and the world; the nearer God the farther from ourselves, and the farther from ourselves the more happy; and the more unity with God, the more unity among ourselves, among the brethren of our family. Because here we are not fully one with our Father, therefore there are many differences between us and our brethren; because we are not one perfectly in him, therefore we are not one, as he and the Father are one. But when he shall be in us, and we in him, as the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, then shall we be one among ourselves, then shall we meet in the unity of the faith, into a perfect man, "into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 13. Christ is the uniting principle: While the saints are not wholly one, *uni tertio*, they cannot be perfectly one *inter se*, among themselves. Consider this, I beseech you. Christ's union with the Father, is the foundation of our union to God, and our union among ourselves. This is comfortable, the ground of it is laid already. Now it is not simply the unity of the Father and the Son in essence that is here meant; for what shadow and resemblance can be in the world, of such an incomprehensible mystery? But it is certainly the union and communion of God with Christ Jesus as mediator, as the

head of the church which is his body. Therefore seeing the Father is so wonderfully well pleased and one with Christ, his well beloved Son and messenger of the covenant, and chief party contracting in our name, he is, by virtue of this, one with us, who are his seed and members. And therefore, the members should grow up in the head Christ, from whom the whole body makes increase according to the effectual working of the Spirit in it, Eph. v. 15, 16. Now, if the union between the Father and Christ our head cannot be dissolved, and cannot be barren and unfruitful; then certainly the Spirit of the Father, which is given to Christ beyond measure, must effectually work in every member, till it bring them to the unity of the faith, and to the measure of the perfect man, which is the fulness of Christ. So then every believing soul is one with the Father as Christ is one, because he is the head and they the members; and the day is coming that all the members shall be perfectly united to the head Christ, and grow up to the perfect man, which is the stature of Christ's fulness, "and then shall we all be made perfect in one: we shall be one as he is one;" because he and we are one perfect man, head and members.

Now, to what purpose is all this spoken? I fear, it doth not stir up in our souls a desire after such a blessed life. Whose heart would not be moved at the sound of such words? "Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son; we are made perfect, he in us, and we in him." Certainly, that soul is void of the life of God, that doth not find some sparkle of holy ambition kindled within, after such a glorious and blessed condition. But these things savour not, and taste not to the most part; the natural man knows them not, for they are spiritually discerned. How lamentable is it, that Christ is come to restore us to our lost blessedness, and yet no man almost considers it or lays it to heart. O how miserable, twice miserable is that soul, that doth not draw near to God in Christ, when God hath come so near to us in Christ; that goes a whoring after the lust of the eyes and flesh,

and after the imaginations of their own heart, and will not be guided by Christ, the way and life, to glory! "Thou shalt destroy them, O Lord," Psal. lxxiii. 27. All men are far off from God, from the womb. Behold, we may have access to God in Christ. Wo to them that are yet afar off, and will not draw near, "they shall all perish." I exhort you to consider what you are doing; the most part of you are going away from God; you were born far off, and you will yet go further; know what you will meet with in that way,—destruction

You have never yet asked in earnest, For what purpose you came into the world? What wonder, ye wander and walk at random, seeing you have not proposed to yourselves any certain scope and aim. It is great folly; you would not be so foolish in any petty business: but O how foolish men are in the main business! "The light of the body is the eye;" if that be not light, the whole body is full of darkness. If your intention be once right established, all your course will be orderly; but if you be dark and blind in this point, and have not considered it, you cannot walk in the light, your whole way is darkness. The right consideration of the great end would shine unto you, and direct your way. But while you have not proposed this end unto yourselves—the enjoyment of God, you must spend your time, either in doing nothing to that purpose, or doing contrary to it. All your other lawful business, your callings and occupations, are but in the by; they are not the end, nor the way, but you make them your only business; they are altogether impertinent to this end. And the rest of your walking in lusts and ignorance, is not only impertinent, but inconsistent with it, and contrary to it. If you think that you have this before your eyes, to enjoy God; I pray you look upon the way you choose. Is your drunkenness, your swearing, your uncleanness, your contentions and railings, and such works of the flesh; are those the way to enjoy God? Shall not these separate between God and you? Is your eating and drinking, sleeping as beasts, and labouring in your callings; are these

all the means you use to enjoy God? Be not deceived, you who draw not near God by prayer often in secret, and by faith in his Son Christ, as lost miserable sinners, to be saved and reconciled by him, you have no fellowship with him, and you shall not enjoy him afterward. You whose hearts are given to your covetousness, who have many lovers and idols besides him, you cannot say, Whom have I besides Thee in earth? No, you have many other things besides God. You can have nothing of God, except ye make him all to you, unless you have him alone. "My undefiled is One," Cant. vi. 9. He must be alone, for his glory he will not give to another. If you divide your affections, and pretend to give him part, and your lusts another part, you may be doing, but he will not divide his glory so, he will give no part of it to any other thing. But as for those souls that come to him and see their misery without him, O know how good it is! It's not only good, but best, yea only good, it is *bonum*, and it is *optimum*, yea, it is *unicum*. There is none good, save one, even God; and there is nothing good for us but this one, to be near God, and so near, that we may be one, one Spirit with the Lord, for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Rejoice in your portion, and long for the possession of it. Let all your meditations, and affections, and conversation, proclaim this, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and none in the earth beside thee." And certainly he shall guide you to the end, and receive you into glory; then you shall rest from your labours, because you shall dwell in him, and enjoy that which you longed and laboured for. Let the consideration of that end unite the hearts of Christians here. O what an absurd thing is it, that those who shall lodge together at night, and be made perfect in one, should not only go contrary ways, but have contrary minds and affections!

III.

THE AUTHORITY AND UTILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 Tim. iii. 16.—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

We told you, that there was nothing more necessary to know, than what our end is, and what the way is that leads to that end. We see the most part of men walking at random, running an uncertain race, because they do not propose unto themselves a certain scope to aim at, and whither to direct their whole course. According to men's particular inclinations and humours, so do the purposes and designs of men vary; and often do the purposes of one man change, according to the circumstances of time, and his condition in the world. We see all men almost running cross one to another. One drives at the satisfaction of his lust by pleasure, another fancies a great felicity in honour, a third in getting riches, and thus men divide themselves; whereas, if it were true happiness that all were seeking, they would all go one way towards one end. If men be not in the right way, the faster they seem to move toward the mark, the farther they go from it. Wandering from the right way, (suppose men intend well) will put them farther from that which they intend. *Si via in contrarium ducat, ipsa velocitas majoris intervalli causa est:* Therefore it concerns us all most deeply to be acquainted with the true path of blessedness; for if we once mistake, the more we do, the swifter we move, the more distant we are from it indeed. And there is the more need, because there are so many by-paths that lead to destruction. What say I? by-paths? No, highways, beaten paths, that the multitude of men walk in, and never challenge, nor will endure to be challenged, as if they were in an error. In other journeys, men keep the plain highway, and are afraid of any secret by-way, lest it lead them wrong: *At hic, via quæque tritissima maxime deci-*

pit. Here the high-pathed way leads wrong, and O far wrong!—to hell. This is the meaning of Christ's sermon, "Enter in at the strait gate, but walk not in the broad way where many walk, for it leads to destruction." Therefore I would have this persuasion once begotten in your souls, that the course of this world, the way of the most part of men, is dangerous, is damnable. O consider whither the way will lead you, before you go farther! Do not think it a folly to stand still now, and examine it, when ye have gone on so long in their company. Stand, I say, and consider. Be not ignorant as beasts, that know no other things than to follow the drove, *quæ pergunt, non qua eundum est, sed qua itur;* they follow not whither they ought to go, but whither most go. You are men, and have reasonable souls within you; therefore I beseech you, be not composed and fashioned according to custom and example, that is, brutish, but according to some inward knowledge and reason. Retire once from the multitude, and ask in earnest at God, what is the way? Him that fears him he will teach the way that he should choose. The way to his blessed end is very strait, very difficult; you must have a guide in it, you must have a lamp and a light in it, else you cannot but go wrong.

The principles of reason within us are too dark and dim, they will never lead us through the pits and snares in the way. These indeed shined brightly in Adam, that he needed no light without him, no voice about him; but sin hath extinguished it much, and there remains nothing but some little spunk, or sparkle, under the ashes of much corruption, that is but insufficient in itself and is often more blinded and darkened by lusts. So that if it were never so much refined, as it was in many heathens, yet it is but the blind leading the blind, and both must fall into the ditch. Our end is high and divine, "to glorify God and to enjoy him," therefore our reason *caligat ad suprema;* it can no more stedfastly behold that glorious end, and move towards it, than our weak eyes can behold the sun. Our eyes can look downward upon the earth, but

not upward to the heavens. So we have some remnant of reason in us, that hath some petty and poor ability for matters of little moment, as the things of this life; but if once we look upward to the glory of God, or eternal happiness, our eyes are dazzled, our reason confounded, we cannot stedfastly behold it, Eph. iv. 18. 2 Cor. iii. 13, 14.

Therefore the Lord hath been pleased to give us the Scriptures, which may be a lamp unto our feet, and a guide unto our way, whereunto we shall do well to take heed, as unto a candle or a light that shines in a dark place, till the day dawn, 2 Peter i. 6. These are "able to make us wise unto salvation." Let us hear what Paul speaks to Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 16. "All scripture is given," &c. Where you have two points of high concernment,—the authority of the Scriptures, and their utility: their authority, for they are given by divine inspiration; their utility, for they are profitable for doctrine, &c. and can make us perfect, and well furnished to every good work.

The authority of it is in a peculiar way divine; "of him and through him are all things." All writings of men, according to the truth of the Scriptures, have some divinity in them, inasmuch as they have of truth, which is a divine thing. Yet the holy scriptures are by way of excellency attributed to God, for they are immediately inspired of God. Therefore Peter saith, that the scriptures came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Peter i. 21. God by his Spirit, as it were, acted the part of the soul, in the prophets and apostles; and they did no more but utter what the Spirit conceived. The Holy Ghost inspired the matter and the words, and they were but tongues and pens to speak and write it unto the people; there needed no debate, no search in their own minds for the truth, no inquisition for light, but light shined upon their souls so brightly, so convincingly, that it put it beyond all question, that it was the mind and voice of God. You need not ask, how they did know that their dreams or visions were indeed from the Lord; and that they did not frame

any imagination in their own hearts, and taught it for his word, as many did? I say, you need no more ask that, than ask, how shall a man see light, or know the sunshine? Light makes itself manifest, and all other things. It is seen by its own brightness. Even so the holy men of God needed not any mark or sign to know the Spirit's voice: his revelation needed not the light of any other thing, it was light itself, it would certainly overpower the soul and mind, and leave no place of doubting. God, who cannot be deceived, and can deceive no man, hath delivered us this doctrine. O! with what reverence shall we receive it, as if we heard the Lord from heaven speak. If you ask how you shall be persuaded that the Scriptures are the word of God,—his very mind opened to men and made legible? Truly there are some things cannot be well proved, not because they are doubtful, but because they are clear of themselves, and beyond all doubt and exception. Principles of arts must not be proved, but supposed, till you find by trial and experience afterward, that they were indeed really true. There are, no question, such characters of divinity and majesty imprinted in the very Scriptures themselves, that whosoever hath the eyes of his understanding opened, though he run he may read them, and find God in them. What majesty is in the very simplicity and plainness of the Scriptures! They do not labour to please men's ears, and adorn the matter with the curious garments of words and phrases; but represent the very matter itself to the soul, as that which in itself is worthy of all acceptation, and needs no human eloquence to commend it. Painting doth spoil native beauty. External ornaments would disfigure some things that are of themselves proportioned and lovely; therefore the Lord chooses a plain and simple style which is foolishness to the world; but in these swaddling clothes of the Scriptures, and this poor cottage, the child Jesus, the Lord of heaven and earth, is contained. There is a jewel of the mysterious wisdom of God, and man's eternal blessedness, in this mineral. What glorious

and astonishing humility is here! What humble and homely glory and majesty also! He is most high, and yet none so lowly. What excellent consent and harmony of many writers in such distant times! Wonder at it! all speak one thing to one purpose,—to bring men to God, to abase all glory, and exalt him alone. Must it not be one Spirit that hath quickened all these, and breathes in them all this one heavenly song, of glory to God on high, and good-will towards men? Other writers will reason these things with you to convince you, and persuade you; and many think them more profound and deep for that reason, and do despise the baseness of the Scriptures; but to them whose eyes are opened, the majesty and authority of God commanding and asserting, and testifying to them, is more convincing, from its own bare assertion, than all human reason.

Although there be much light in the Scriptures to guide men's way to God's glory and their own happiness, yet it will all be to small purpose if the eyes of our understanding be darkened and blinded. If you shall surround a man with day-light, except he open his eyes, he cannot see. The Scriptures are a clear sun of life and righteousness; but the blind soul encompassed with that light is nothing the wiser, but thinks the lamp of the word shines not, because it sees not, it hath its own dungeon within it. Therefore the Spirit of God must open the eyes of the blind, and enlighten the eyes of the understanding, that the soul may see wonderful things in God's law, Psal. cxix. 5, 8. John i. 5. The light may shine in the darkness, but the darkness cannot comprehend it. I wonder not that the most part of men can see no beauty, no majesty, no excellency in the holy Scriptures to allure them, because they are natural, and have not the Spirit of God, and so cannot know these things, for they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14, &c. Therefore as the inspiration of God did conceive this writing at first, and preached this doctrine unto the world; so there can no soul understand it, or profit by it, but by the inspiration of the Al-

mighty. "Verily there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding," saith Job. When the Spirit comes into the soul to engrave the characters of that law and truth into the heart, which were once engraven on tables of stone, and not written with pen and ink; then the Spirit of Christ Jesus writes over and transcribes the doctrine of the gospel on fleshly tables of the heart, draws the lineaments of that faith and love preached in the word upon the soul; then the soul is the epistle of Christ, written, not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, 2 Cor. iii. 3. And then the soul is manifestly declared to be such, when that which is impressed on the heart is expressed in the outward man in walking, that it may be read of all men. Now, the soul having thus received the image of the Scriptures on it, understands the Spirit's voice in them, and sees the truth and divinity of them. The eye must receive some species and likeness of the object before it see it; it must be made like to the object ere it can behold it: *Intelligens in actu fit ipsum intelligibile.* So the soul must have some inspiration of the Holy Ghost, before it can believe with the heart the inspired Scriptures.

Now, for the utility and profit of the Scriptures, who can speak of it according to its worth? Some things may be over-commended, nay, all things but this one, God speaking in his word to mankind. Many titles are given to human writings; some are called accurate, some subtile, some ingenious, and some profound and deep, some plain, some learned; but call them what they please, the Scripture may vindicate to itself these two titles as its own prerogative, holy and profitable. The best speaker in the world, in many words cannot want sin, the best writer hath some dross and refuse; but here, all is holy, all is profitable. Many books are to no purpose, but to feed and inflame men's lusts; many serve for nothing, but to spend and drive over the time, without thought; most part are good for nothing, but to burden and over-weary the world, to put them in a fancy of knowledge which they have

not; many serve for this only, to nourish men's curiosity and vain imaginations, and contentions about words and notions; but here is a book profitable, all profitable. If you do not yet profit by it, you can have no pleasure in it; it is only ordained for soul's profiting, not for pleasing your fancy, not for matter of curious speculation, not for contention and strife, about the interpretation of it. Many books have nothing in them, but specious titles to commend them. They do nothing less than what they promise. They have a large and fair entry, which leads only into a poor cottage; but the Scriptures have no hyperbolic and superlative styles to allure men; they hold out a plain and common gate and entry which will undoubtedly lead to a pleasant palace; others *et prodesse volunt et delectare*, but these certainly *et prodesse volunt et possunt*, they both can profit you and will profit you. I wish that souls would read the Scriptures as profitable Scriptures, with intention to profit. If you do not read with such a purpose, you read not the Scriptures of God, they become as another book unto you. But what are they profitable for? For doctrine, and a divine doctrine; a doctrine of life and happiness. 'Tis the great promise of the new covenant, "You shall be all taught of God." The Scriptures can make a man learned and wise, learned to salvation; it is foolishness to the world, "but the world through wisdom know not God." Alas! what do they then know? Is there any besides God? And is there any knowledge besides the knowledge of God? You have a poor petty wisdom among you, to gather riches and manage your business. Others have a poor imaginary wisdom that they call learning; and generally people think, to pray to God is but a paper-skill, a little book-craft; they think the knowledge of God is nothing else but to learn to read the Bible. Alas! mistake not; it is another thing to know God. The doctrine of Jesus Christ written on the heart, is a deep profound learning; and the poor, simple, rudest people may by the Spirit's teaching become wiser than their ancients, than their ministers.

O! 'tis an excellent point of learning, to know how to be saved. What is it, I pray you, to know the course of the heavens? to number the orbs, and the stars in them? to measure their circumference, to reckon their motions, and yet not to know Him that sits on the circle of them, and not know how to inhabit and dwell there? If you would seek unto God, and seek eyes opened to behold the mystery of the word, you would become wiser than your pastors, you would learn from the Spirit to pray better, you would find the way to heaven better than they can teach you, or walk in it.

Then, it is "profitable for reproof and correction." It contains no doctrine very pleasant to men's natural humours; but it is indeed most pleasant to a right and ordered taste. You know, the distemper of the eye, or the perverting of the taste, will misrepresent pleasant things, and sweet things to the senses, and make them appear ill-savoured and bitter. But, I say, to a discerning spirit there is nothing so sweet, so comely. "I have seen an end of all perfection," but none of thy law. "Thy word is sweeter to me than the honey, or the honeycomb." If a soul be prepossessed with the love of the world, and the lusts of the world, it cannot savour and taste of them; that vicious quality in the mind will make the pleasant gospel unpleasant. "I piped unto you, and ye have not danced." But, however, the Scriptures are then most profitable when they are least pleasant to our corruptions; and therefore, it is an absolute and entire piece, *et prodesse volunt et delectare. Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.* There are sharp reproofs, and sad corrections of his holy law, which must make way for the pleasant and sweet gospel. There is a reproof of life, a wounding before healing, that "whoso refuse them, despise their own soul, but the ear that heareth them abideth among the wise," Prov. xv. 31. Woe unto that soul that correction, or reproof, or threatening is grievous unto, "he shall die," ver. 10; "he is brutish," Prov. xii. 1. There is a generation of men, that can endure to hear no-

thing but gospel-promises, that cry out against all reproving of sins, and preaching of God's wrath against unbelieving sinners, as legal, and meddling with other men's matters, especially if they reprove the sins of rulers, their public state enormities. As if the whole word of God were not profitable ; as if reproofs were not as wholesome as consolations ; as if threatenings did not contribute to make men flee from the wrath to come into a city of refuge. Let such persons read their own character out of wise Solomon, "Correction is grievous to them that forsake the way." "Reprove a wise man, and he will love thee, and he will be yet wiser," Prov. ix. 9. If we were pleasers of men, then were we not the servants of Jesus Christ ; let us strive to profit men, but not to please them. Peace, peace, which men's own hearts fancy, would please them ; but it were better for them to be awakened out of that dream, by reproof, by correction ; and he that will do so, shall "find more favour of him afterward, than he that flattereth him with his tongue," Prov. xxviii. 23.

Well then, let this be established in your hearts as the foundation of all true religion, that the Scriptures are the word of the eternal God, and that they contain a perfect and exact rule both of glorifying God, and of the way to enjoy him. They can make you perfect to every good work. I shall say no more on this, but beseech you, as you love your own souls, be acquainting yourselves with them. You will hear, in these days, of men pretending to more divine and spiritual discoveries, and revelations, than the Scriptures contain. But, my brethren, these can make you wise to salvation, these can make you perfect to every good work. Then, what needs more ? All that is beside salvation, and beyond perfection, count it superfluous and vain, if not worse, if not diabolical. Let others be wise to their own destruction ; let them establish their own imaginations for the word of God, and rule of their faith, but hold you fast what you have received, and contend earnestly for it. Add nothing, and diminish nothing ; let this lamp shine till the day dawn, till the morning of the

resurrection, and walk ye in the light of it, and do not kindle any other sparkles, else ye shall lie down in the grave in sorrow, and rise in sorrow. Take the word of God as the only rule, and the perfect rule, a rule for all your actions, civil, natural, and religious, for all must be done to his glory, and his word teacheth how to attain to that end. Let not your imaginations, let not others' example, let not the preaching of men, let not the conclusions and Acts of Assemblies, be your rule, but in as far as you find them agreeing with the perfect rule of God's holy word. All other rules are *regulæ regulatæ;* they are but like publications and intimations of the rule itself. Ordinances of assemblies are but like the herald-promulgation of the king's statute and law; if it vary in any thing from his intention, 'tis not valid and binding. I beseech you, take the Scriptures for the rule of your walking, or else you will wander; the Scripture is *regula regulans*, a ruling rule. If you be not acquainted with it, you must follow the opinions or examples of other men; and what if they lead you unto destruction?

IV.

THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

John v. 39.—Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me. Eph. ii. 20.—And are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles.

As in darkness, there is need of a lantern without, and the light of the eyes within, for neither can we see in darkness without some lamp, though we have never so good eyes, nor yet see without eyes, though in never so clear a sunshine; so there is absolute need for the guiding of our feet in the dangerous and dark paths to eternal life (that are full of pits and snares,) of the lamp, or word written or preached, without us, and the illumination of the Holy Ghost within us. These are conjoined,

Isa. lix. 21. "This is my covenant, the Spirit that is upon thee, and the words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed," &c. There are words without, and there must needs be a spirit within, which makes us to behold the truth and grace contained in these words. There is a law written without, with pen and ink, and there is a law written within, upon the heart, with the Spirit of the living God. The law without is the pattern and exact copy; the law within, is the transcript or the image of God upon the heart, framed and fashioned according to the similitude of it, 2 Cor. iii. 3. Heb. viii. 10. So then, there needs be no more question about the divine authority of the Scriptures, among those who have their senses exercised to discern between good and ill, than among men who see, and taste, concerning light and darkness, sweet and bitter. The persuasion of a Christian is fetched deeper than the reasons of men. Their faith is the evidence of things not seen. It is an eye, a supernatural eye, whereby a soul beholds that majesty and excellency of God shining in the word, which, though it shine about the rest of the world, yet 'tis not seen, because they cannot know it, nor discern it. Wonder not, that the multitude of men cannot believe the report that is made; that there are few who find any such excellency and sweetness in the gospel as is reported, because saith Isaiah, liii. 1, "the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them." The hand of God must first write on their heart, ere they understand the writings of the Scriptures; his arm must create an eye in their souls, an eternal light, before it can behold that glorious brightness of God shining in the word. The word is God's testimony of himself, of his grace and mercy, and goodwill to mankind. Now no man can receive this testimony, unless it be sealed and confirmed by the Holy Ghost into the heart: saith Peter, "We are his witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to those that obey him," Acts v. 32. The word witnesses to the ear, and the Spirit testifieth to our spirits

the truth and worth of that, and therefore the Spirit is a seal and a witness. The word is the Lord's voice to his own children, bastards cannot know it, "but my sheep know my voice," John x. 4, 16. You know no difference between the bleating of one sheep from another, but the poor lambs know their mother's voice; there is a secret instinct of nature that is more powerful than many marks and signs: even so those who are begotten of God know his voice, they discern that in it, which all the world that hear it cannot discern, there is a sympathy between their souls and that living word. That word is the immortal seed they are begotten of, and there is a natural instinct to love that, and to meditate in it; such an inclination to it, as in new-born babes to the breasts; so the children of God "do desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby," as they were born of it, 1 Pet. ii. 2. In those Scriptures which we read in your audience, you have something of their excellency, and our duty. There is a rich jewel in them, a precious pearl in that field, even Jesus Christ, and in him eternal life; and therefore we ought to search the Scriptures for this jewel, to dig in the field for this pearl, the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, as a sure foundation whereupon souls may build their eternal felicity, and the hope of it. Jesus Christ is the very chief stone in that foundation, whereupon the weight of all the saints and all their hope hangs. And therefore we ought to lean the weight of our souls only to this truth of God, and build our faith only upon it, and square our practice only by it.

We shall speak something of the first, that it may be a spur to the second. The Jews had some respective opinion of the word of God; they knew that in them was eternal life; they thought it a doctrine of life and happiness, and so cried up Moses' writings, but they would not believe Christ's words. They erred, not understanding the scriptures, and so set the writings of Moses' law at variance with the preaching of Christ's Gospel. What a pitiful mistake was this? They thought they had eternal life

in the scriptures, and yet they did not receive nor acknowledge Him whom to know was eternal life. Therefore our Lord Jesus sends them back again to the scriptures,—go and search them; you think, and you think well, that in them ye may find the way to eternal life; but while you seek it in them you mistake it: these scriptures testify of me, the end of the law, but you cannot behold the end of that ministry, because of the blindness of your hearts, Rom. x. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 13, 14. Therefore search again, unfold the ceremonies; I am wrapt in them, and life eternal with me. Dig up the law till you find the bottom of God's purpose in it, till you find the end of the ministration, and you shall find me, the way, the truth, and life; and so you shall have that eternal life which now you do but think you have, and are beguiled. While you seek it out of me, in vain you think you have it, for it is not in the Scriptures, but because they testify of me, the life and the light of men. May not this now commend the word to us? eternal life is in it. Other writings and discourses may tickle the ears, with some pleasing eloquence, but that is vanishing. It is but like a musician's voice. Some may represent some petty and momentary advantage, but how soon shall an end be put to all that? So that within a little time the advantage of all the books of the world shall be gone. The statutes and laws of kings and parliaments can reach no further than some temporal reward or punishment; their highest pain is the killing of this body, their highest reward is some evanishing and fading honour, or perishing riches: but he showeth his word and judgments to us, and hath not dealt so with every nation, Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. And no nation under the whole heaven hath such laws and ordinances; eternal life and eternal death is wrapt up in them. These are rewards and punishments suitable to the majesty and magnificence of the eternal Lawgiver. Consider, I beseech you, what is folded up here,—the Scriptures shew the path of life; life is of all things the most excellent, and comes nearest the blessed being of God.

When we say life, we understand a blessed life, that only deserves the name. Now this we have lost in Adam. Death is passed upon all men, but that death is not the worst; 'tis but a consequence of a soul-death. The immortal soul, whose life consisteth in communion with God, and peace with him, is separated from him by sin, and so killed, when it is cut off from the fountain of life; what a life can it have more, than a beam that is cut off by the intervention of a dark body from the sun. Now then, what a blessed doctrine must it be that brings to light, life and immortality? especially when we have so miserably lost it, and involved our souls into an eternal death. Life is precious in itself, but much more precious to one condemned to die, to be caught out of the paws of the lion, to be brought back from the gibbet. O how will that commend the favour of a little more time in the world. But then if we knew what an eternal misery we are involved into, and stand under a sentence binding us over to such an inconceivable and insupportable punishment as is the curse and wrath of God! O how precious an esteem would souls have of the Scriptures, how would they be sweet unto their soul, because they show unto us a way of escaping that pit of misery, and a way of attaining eternal blessedness, as satisfying and glorious, as the misery would have been vexing and tormenting! O that ye would once lay these in the balance together,—this present life and life eternal! Know ye not, that your souls are created for eternity, that they will eternally survive all these present things? Now how do ye imagine they shall live after this life? Your thoughts, and projects, and designs are confined within the poor narrow bounds of your time. When you die, in that day your thoughts shall perish. All your imaginations, and purposes, and providences shall have an end then. They reach no farther than that time, and if you should wholly perish too, it were not so much matter. But for all your purposes and projects to come to an end, when you are but beginning to live, and enter eternity, that is lamentable indeed!

Therefore I say, consider what ye are doing, weigh these in a balance,—eternal life and the present life; if there were no more difference but the continuance of the one, and the shortness of the other, that the world's standing is but as one day, one moment to eternity,—that ought to preponderate in your souls. Do we not here flee away as a shadow upon the mountains? Are we not as a vapour that ascends, and for a little time appears a solid body, and then presently vanisheth? Do we not come all into the stage of the world, as for an hour, to act our part and be gone; now then, what is this to endless eternity? When you have continued as long as since the world began, you are no nearer the end of it. Ought not that estate then to be most in your eyes, how to lay up a foundation for the time to come? But then, compare the misery and the vexation of this life, with the glory and felicity of this eternal life. What are our days? But few and full of trouble. Or, if you will, take the most blessed estate you have seen and heard of in this world, of kings and rich men, and help all the defects of it by your imaginations; suppose unto yourselves the height and pitch of glory, and abundance, and power that is attainable on earth; and when your fancy hath busked up such a felicity, compare it with an eternal life: O how will that vanish out of your imaginations! If so be you know any thing of the life to come, you will even think that an odious comparison, you will think all that earthly felicity, but light as vanity, "every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." Eternal life will weigh down eternally, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. O but it hath an exceeding weight in itself; one moment of it, one hour's possession and taste of it! but then what shall the endless endurance of it add to its weight? Now there are many that presume they have a right to eternal life, as the Jews did. You think saith he, that you have it; you think well, that you think 'tis only to be found in the Scriptures; but you vainly think that you have found it in them: and there is this reason for it, "because you will not come to me that you

may have life," ver. 40. If you did understand the true meaning of the Scriptures, and did not rest on the outward letter and ordinances; you would receive the testimony that the Scriptures give of me. But now you hear not me, the Father's substantial Word, "therefore you have not his Word abiding in you," ver. 38. There was nothing more general among that people, than a vain carnal confidence and presumption of being God's people, and having interest in the promise of life eternal, as it is this day in the visible church. There is a multitude that are Christians only in the letter, and not in the spirit, that would never admit any question concerning this great matter of having eternal life, and so by not questioning it, they come to think they have it, and by degrees their conjectures and thoughts about this ariseth to the stability of some feigned and strong persuasion of it. In the Old Testament the Lord strikes at the root of their persuasions, by discovering unto them, how vain a thing it was, and how abominable it was before him, to have an external profession of being his people, and to glory in external ordinances and privileges, and yet to neglect altogether the purging of their hearts and consciences from lust and idol-sins, and to make no conscience of walking righteously towards men. Their profession was contradicted by their practice, "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and yet come and stand in my house," Jer. vii. 8, 9. Doth not that say as much as if I had given you liberty to do all these abominations? Even so it is this day; the most part have no more of Christianity but a name. They have some outward privileges of baptism and hearing the word, and, it may be, have a form of knowledge, and a form of worship; but in the meantime they are not baptized in heart, they are in all their conversation even conformed to the heathen world; they hate personal reformation, and think it too precise and needless. Now, I say, such are many of you, and yet ye would not take well to have it questioned, whether ye shall be partakers of eternal life? You think

you are wronged when that is called in question. Oh! that it were beyond all question indeed. But know assuredly, that you are but Christians in the letter, in the flesh, and not in the spirit. Many of you have not so much as a form of knowledge—have not so much as the letter of religion. You have heard some names in the preaching often repeated, as Christ, and God, and faith, and heaven, and hell, and you know no more of these but the name. You consider not, and meditate not on them; and though you know the truth of the word, yet the word abideth not, nor dwelleth in you. You have it in your mouth, you have it in your mind or understanding, but it is not received in love, it doth not dwell in the heart. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," Col. iii. 16. You have it imprisoned in your minds, and shut up in a corner where it is useless, and can do no more but witness against you, and scarce that. As the Gentiles incarcerated and detained the truth of God, written by nature within them, in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18, so do many of you detain the knowledge of his word in unrighteousness. It hath no place in the heart, gets no liberty and freedom to walk through the affections, and so to order the conversation of men; and therefore the most part of men do but fancy to themselves an interest and right to eternal life. You think it, and do but think it; it is but a strong imagination, that hath no strength from the grounds of it, no stability from any evidence or promise, but merely from itself; or it is but a light and vain conjecture that hath no strength in it, because there is no question or doubts admitted which may try the strength of it. But then I suppose that a man could attain some answerable walking, that he had not only a form of knowledge, but some reality of practice, some inward heat of affection and zeal for God and godliness, yet there is one thing that he wants, and if it be wanting will spoil all; and it is this, which Christ reproves in the Jews, "you will not come to me to have life;" the Scriptures testify of me, but you receive not their testimony. Suppose a man had as much

equity and justice towards men, piety towards God, and sobriety towards himself, as can be found amongst the best of men; let him be a diligent reader of the Scriptures, let him love them, and meditate on them day and night, yet if he do not come out of himself, and leave all his own righteousness as dung behind him, that he may be found in Jesus Christ, he hath no life, he cannot have any right to life eternal. You may think this a strange assertion, that if a man had the righteousness and holiness of an angel, yet he could not be saved without denying all that, and fleeing to Christ as an ungodly man; and you may think it as strange a supposal, that any person that reads the Scriptures, and walks righteously, and hath a zeal towards God, yet are such as will not come to Christ, and will not hear him whom the Father hath sent.

But the first is the very substance of the gospel. "There is no other name by which men may be saved, but by Jesus Christ," Acts iv. 12. Life eternal is all within him. All the treasures of grace, and wisdom, and knowledge, are seated in him, Col. i. 19.; ii. 3. All the light of life and salvation is embodied in this sun of righteousness, since the eclipse of man's felicity in the garden. Adam was a living soul, but he lost his own life, and killed his posterity. Christ Jesus, the second common man in the world, is a quickening spirit. He hath not only life in himself, but he gives it more abundantly; and therefore you have it so often repeated in John, who was the disciple most acquainted with Christ, "in him was life; and the life was the light of men," John i. 4. And he is the bread of life, that gives life to the world, John vi. 33, 35. He is "the resurrection and the life," xi. 25. and "the way, the truth, and the life," xiv. 6. The scriptures do not contain eternal life, but in as far as they lead to him who is Life, and whom to know and embrace is eternal life: and therefore (saith he) "these are they which testify of me." Man lived immediately in God when he was in innocency; he had life in himself from God; but then he began to live in himself without dependence on God the fountain

of life, and this himself being interposed between God and his life, it evanished even as a beam by the intervening of any gross body between it and the sun. Now man's light and life being thus eclipsed and cut off, the Lord is pleased to let all fulness dwell in his Son Jesus Christ, and the fulness of the God-head dwelt in him bodily, Col. ii. 9., that since there was no access immediately to God for life (a flaming fire, and sword of divine justice compassing and guarding the tree of life, lest man should touch it) there might be access to God in a mediator like unto us, that we might come to him, and might have life from God by the intervention of Jesus Christ.

Look then what is in the Holy Scriptures, and you shall find it but a letter of death and ministration of condemnation while it is separated from him. Christ is the very life and spirit of the Scriptures, by whose virtue they quicken our souls. If you consider the perfect rule of righteousness in the law, you cannot find life there, because you cannot be conformed unto it; the holiest man offends in every thing, and that holy law being violated in any thing will send thee to hell with a curse. "Cursed is he that abides not in every thing." If you look upon the promise of life, "do this and live;" what comfort can you find in it, except you could find doing in yourselves: and can any man living find such exact obedience as the law requires? There is a mistake among many. They conceive that the Lord cannot but be well pleased with them if they do what they can. But be not deceived,—the law of God requires perfect doing; it will not compound with thee, and come down in its terms; not one jot of the rigour of it will be remitted. If you cannot do all that is commanded, all you do will not satisfy that promise; therefore thou must be turned over from the promise of life to the curse, and there thou shalt find thy name written. Therefore it is absolutely necessary, that Jesus Christ be made under the law, and give obedience in all things, even to the death of the cross, and so be made a curse for us, and sin for us, even he who knew no sin. And thus

in him you find the law fulfilled, justice satisfied, and God pleased. In him you find the promise of life indeed established in a better and surer way than was first propounded. You find life by his death, you find life in his doing for you. And again, consider the ceremonial law,—what were all those sacrifices and ceremonies? Did God delight in them? Could he savour their incense and sweet smells, and eat the fat of lambs and be pacified? No, he detests and abhors such abominations. Because that people did stay in the letter, and went no further than the ceremony; he declares, that it was as great abomination to him as the offering up of a dog. While they were separated from Jesus Christ, in whom his soul rested, and was pacified, they were not expiations, but provocations; they were not propitiations for sin, but abominations in themselves. But take these as the shadow of such a living substance; take them as remembrances of him who was to come, and behold Jesus Christ lying in these swaddling clothes of ceremonies, until the fulness of time should come, that he might be manifested in the flesh, and so you shall find eternal life in those dead beasts, in those dumb ceremonies. If you consider this Lamb of God slain in all these sacrifices, from the beginning of the world, then you present a sweet-smelling savour to God, then you offer the true propitiation for the sins of the world, then he will delight more in that sacrifice than all other personal obedience.

But what if I should say, that the gospel itself is a killing letter, and ministration of death, being severed from Christ? I should say nothing amiss, but what Paul speaketh, that his gospel was a savour of death to many. Take the most powerful preaching, the most sweet discourse, the most plain writings of the free grace and salvation in the gospel; take all the preaching of Jesus Christ himself and his apostles, and you shall not find life in them, unless ye be led by that Spirit of Christ unto himself, who is the resurrection and the life. It will no more save you than the covenant of works, unless that

word abide and dwell in your hearts, to make you believe in him, and embrace him with your souls, whom God hath sent. Suppose you heard all, and heard it gladly, and learned it, and could discourse well upon it, and teach others, yet if you be not driven out of yourselves, out of your own righteousness, as well as sins, and pursued to this city of refuge, Jesus Christ, you have not eternal life. Your knowledge of the truth of the gospel, and your obedience to God's law, will certainly kill you; and as certainly as your ignorance and disobedience, unless you have embraced in your soul that good thing Jesus Christ, contained in these truths, who is the diamond of that golden ring of the Scriptures; and unless your soul embrace these promises as soul-saving, as containing the chief good, and worthy of all acceptation, as well as your mind receive these as true and faithful sayings, 1 Tim. i. 15.

Thus ye see Jesus Christ is either the subject of all in the Scriptures, or the end of it all. He is the very proper subject of the gospel. Paul knew nothing but Christ crucified in his preaching; and he is the very end and scope "of the law for righteousness," Rom. x. 3. All the preaching of a covenant of works, all the curses and threatenings of the Bible, all the rigid exactions of obedience, all come to this one great design; not that we set about such a walking to please God, or do something to pacify him, but that we being concluded under sin and wrath, on the one hand, and an impossibility to save ourselves, on the other hand, Gal. iii. 22., Rom. v. 20, 21., may be pursued unto Jesus Christ for righteousness and life, who is both able to save us, and ready to welcome us. Therefore the Gospel opens the door of salvation in Christ, the law is behind us with fire and sword, and destruction pursuing us; and all for this end, that sinners may come to him and have life. Thus the law is made the pedagogue of the soul to lead to Christ; Christ is behind us, cursing, condemning, threatening us, and he is before with stretched-out arms ready to receive us, bless us, and save us, inviting, promising, exhorting to have life. Christ is on

mount Sinai, delivering the law with thunders, Acts. vii. 38; and he is on the mount Zion, in the calm voice; he is both upon the mountain of cursings and blessings, and on both doing the part of a mediator, Gal. iii. 19, 20. It is love that is in his heart which made him first cover his countenance with frowns and threats, and 'tis love that again displays itself in his smiling countenance. Thus souls are inclosed with love pursuing, and love receiving: and thus the law which seems most contrary to the Gospel, testifies of Christ. It gives him this testimony, that except salvation be in him, it is no where else. The law says, It is not in me, seek it not in obedience; I can do nothing but destroy you, if you abide under my jurisdiction. The ceremonies and sacrifices say, if you can behold the end of this ministry, if a veil be not upon your hearts, as it was upon Moses' face, 2 Cor. iii. 14., you may see where it is. It is not in your obedience, but in the death and suffering of the Son of God, whom we represent. Then the Gospel takes all these coverings and veils away, and gives a plain and open testimony of him; there is no name under heaven to be saved by, but Christ's. The Old Testament spake by figures and signs, as dumb men do, but the New speaks in plain words, and with open face. Now I say, for all this that there is no salvation but in him, yet many souls, not only those who live in their gross sins, and have no form of godliness, but even the better sort of people, that have some knowledge and civility, and a kind of zeal for God, yet they do not "come to him that they may have life," Rom. x. 1, 2, 3; they do not submit to the righteousness of God. Here is the march that divides the ways of heaven and hell, coming to Jesus Christ, and forsaking ourselves. The confidence of these souls is chiefly or only in that little knowledge, or zeal, or profession they have, they do not as really abhor themselves for their own righteousness, as for their unrighteousness. They make that the covering of their nakedness and filthiness which is in itself as menstruous and unclean as any thing. It is now the very propension and

natural inclination of our hearts, to stand upright in ourselves. Faith bows a soul's back to take on Christ's righteousness, but presumption lifts up a soul upon its own bottom. How can ye believe that seek honour one of another? The engagements of the soul to its own credit or estimation, the engagements of self-love and self-honour, do lift up a soul, that it cannot submit to God's righteousness, to righteousness in another. And therefore many do dream and think that they have eternal life, who shall awake in the end, and find that it was but a dream, a night-fancy.

Now from all this I would enforce this duty upon your consciences, to search the Scriptures if you think to have eternal life; then again search them, for these are they that testify of him. Searching imports diligence, much diligence, 'tis a serious work; 'tis not a common seeking of an easy and common thing, but 'tis a search and scrutiny for some hidden thing, for some special thing. 'Tis not bare reading of the Scriptures that will answer this duty, except it be diligent and daily reading; and 'tis not that alone, except the spirit within meditate on them and by meditation accomplish a diligent search. There is some hidden secret that you must search for, that is inclosed within the covering of words and sentences. There is a mystery of wisdom that you must apply your hearts to search out, Eccl. vii. 5. Jesus Christ is the treasure that is hid in this field, O a precious treasure of eternal life! Now then, souls, search into the fields of the Scriptures, Prov. ii. 4. for him as for hid treasure. It is not only truth you must seek and buy, and not sell it, but 'tis life you would search; here is an object that may not only take up your understandings, but satisfy your hearts. Think not you have found all when you have found truth there, and learned it: no, except you have found life there, you have found nothing, you have missed the treasure. If you would profit by the Scriptures you must bring both your understanding and your affections to them, and depart not till they both return full. If you bring your un-

derstanding to seek the truth, you may find truth, but not truly: you may find it, but you are not found of it. You may lead truth captive, and inclose it in a prison of your mind, and encompass it about with a guard of corrupt affections, that it shall have no issue, no outgoing to the rest of your souls and ways, and no influence on them. You may know the truth, but you are not known of it, nor brought into captivity to the obedience of it. The treasure that is hid in the Scriptures is Jesus Christ, whose entire and perfect name is, Way, Truth, and Life. He is a living truth and true life: therefore Christ is the adequate object of the soul, commensurable to all its faculties. He has truth in him to satisfy the mind, and has life and goodness in him to satiate the heart; therefore if thou wouldst find Jesus Christ, bring thy whole soul to seek him, as Paul expresseth it. He is true and faithful, and worthy of all acceptation, then bring thy judgment to find the light of truth, and thy affections to embrace the life of goodness that is in him. Now, as much as ye find of him, so much have ye profited in the Scriptures. If you find commands there which you cannot obey, search again, and you may find strength under that command. Dig a little deeper, and you shall find Jesus the end of an impossible command. And when you have found him, you have found life and strength to obey, and you have found a propitiation and sacrifice for transgressing and not obeying. If you find curses in it, search again, and you shall find Jesus Christ under that, "made a curse for us;" you shall find him the end of the curse for righteousness to every one that believes. When you know all the letter of the Scripture, yet you must search into the spirit of it, that it may be imprinted into your spirits. All you know does you no good but as 'tis received in love; unless your souls become a living epistle, and the word without be written on the heart, you have found nothing. As for you that cannot read the Scriptures, if it be possible, take that pains to learn to read them. O if you knew what they contain, and whom they bear witness of, you would

have little quietness till you could read, at least his love-epistles to sinners. And if you cannot learn, be not discouraged, but if your desires within be fervent, your endeavours to hear it read by others will be more earnest. But it is not so much the reading of much of it that profiteth, as the pondering of these things in your hearts, and digesting them by frequent meditation, till they become the food of the soul. This was David's way, and by this he grew to the stature of a tall and well-bodied Christian.

V.

THE SCRIPTURES EXHIBIT CHRIST THE SURE FOUNDATION,

Eph. ii. 20.—And built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

Believers are the temple of the living God, in which he dwells and walks: 2 Cor. vi. 16. Every one of them is a little sanctuary and temple to his majesty; sanctify the Lord of hosts in your hearts. Though he be the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, yet he is pleased to come down to this poor cottage of a creature's heart, and dwell in it. Is not this as great a humbling and condescending for the Father to come down off his throne of glory, to the poor, base footstool of the creature's soul, as for the Son to come down in the state of a servant, and become in the form of sinful flesh. But then he is a temple and sanctuary to them, "and he shall be to you a sanctuary, (Isa. viii.) a place of refuge, a secret hiding place." Now, as every one is a little separated retired temple, so they all conjoined make up one temple, one visible body in which he dwells. Therefore Peter calls them living stones, built up into a spiritual house to God, 1 Pet. ii. 5. All these little temples make up one house and temple, fitly joined together, in which God shews manifest signs of his presence and working. Unto this the

apostle in this place alludes. The communion, and union of Christians with God, is of such a nature, that all the relations and points of conjunction in the creatures are taken to resemble it, and hold it out to us. We are citizens, saith he, and domestics, household men, and so dwell in his house; and then we are his house beside. Now ye know there are two principal things in a house, the foundation and the corner-stone; the one supports the building, the other unites it, and holds it together. These two parts of this spiritual building are here pointed at. The foundation of every particular stone, and of the whole building, is the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, as holding out Jesus Christ to souls, the rock on which our house shall be builded. Not the apostles, or prophets, far less pastors and teachers since; for they are but at best, workerstogether with God, and employed in the building of the house. Nor yet their doctrine, but as it holds out that true foundation that God had laid in Zion, Isa. xxviii, which is Jesus Christ; for other foundation can no man lay. And then the corner-stone is that same Jesus Christ, who reaches from the bottom even to the top of the building, and immediately touches every stone, and both quickens it in itself, and unites them together.

Well then, here is a sure foundation to build our eternal happiness upon; the word of God, that endures for ever, holds it out to us. All men are building upon something. Every man is about some establishment of his hopes, lays some foundation of his confidence, which he may stand upon. They are one of the two that Christ speaks of, Luke vi. 46. One builds on the rock, another on the sand. Now as the foundation is, so is the house. A changeable foundation makes a falling house; a sure foundation makes an unchangeable house; a house without a foundation will prove quickly no house. Now whatsoever men build their hope and confidence upon, beside the word of God, his sure promise and sure covenant, and Jesus Christ in them, they build upon no foundation,

or upon a sandy foundation. "All flesh is grass, and the flower and perfection of it is as the flower of the field." Here is the name and character of all created perfections, of the most excellent endowments of mind, of all the specious actions of man; 'tis all but vanishing and vanity. Every man at his best estate is such, yea, altogether such. You who have no more to build upon but your prosperity and wealth, O that is but sand and dung: would any man build a house upon a dung-hill? You who have no other hope but in your own good prayers and meanings, your own reformations and repentances, your professions and practices; know this, that your hope is like a spider's house, like the web that she hath laboriously exercised herself about all the week over, and then when you lean upon that house it shall fall through, and not sustain your weight. Whatsoever it be, beside this living stone, Jesus Christ, who is the very substance of the word and promises, it shall undoubtedly prove thy shame and confusion. But behold the opposition the prophet makes between the word and these other things, "the word of our God shall stand for ever," Isa. xl. 6, 7, 8. And therefore Peter makes it an incorruptible seed of which believers are begotten, 1 Peter i. 23. It is the unchangeable truth and immutable faithfulness of God that makes his word so sure, "'tis builded up to the heavens." Therefore the Psalmist often commends the word of the Lord as a tried word, as purified seven times. It hath endured the trial and proof of all men, of all temptations, of all generations. It hath often been put in the furnace of questions, and doubtings; it hath often been tried in the fire of afflictions, but it came forth like pure gold, without dross. This is faith's foundation, "God hath spoken in his holiness," and therefore, though all men be liars, yet God will be found true; he deceives none, and is deceived of none. The Lord hath taken a latitude to himself in his working, he loves to shew his sovereignty in much of that; and therefore he changes it in men and upon men, as he pleaseth. Yet he hath condescended to limit and bound himself

by his word, and in this to shew his faithfulness. And therefore, though heaven and earth should pass away, though he should annihilate this world, and create new ones, yet "not one jot of his word shall fail." The earth is established sure, though it hath no foundation, for the word of his command supports it: and yet a believer's confidence is upon a surer ground, "Though the earth should be removed, yet it cannot pass or fail," saith our Lord. And therefore the Psalmist useth to boast in God, "That though the earth were moved, and the floods lifted up their voice, yet he would not fear," because his foundation was unshaken for all that; the word is not moved, when the world is moved, and therefore he was not moved. The world's stability depends upon a word of command, but our salvation depends on a word of promise. Now, ye know, promises put an obligation upon the person, which commands do not. A man may change his commands as he pleases to his children or servants, but he may not change his promises. Therefore the promises of God put an obligation upon him, who is truth itself, not to fail in performance; or rather he is to himself, by his unchangeable will and good pleasure, by his faithfulness and truth, an obliging and binding law. When no creature could set bounds to him, he incloses himself within the bounds of promises to us, and gives all flesh liberty to challenge him if he be not faithful.

Now all the promises of God are yea and amen in Jesus Christ, that is, established and confirmed in him. Christ is the surety of them, and so the certainty and stability of them depends upon him, at least to our sense; for God in all his dealing condescends to our weakness, that we may have strong consolation. A promise might suffice to ground our faith, but he addeth an oath to his promise, and he takes Christ surety for the performance; and therefore Christ may be called the truth indeed, the substantial word of God, for he is the very substance of the written and preached word. And then he is the certainty and assurance of it; the Scriptures testify of him,

and lead us to this rock higher than we, to build upon, and against this the gates of hell cannot prevail. If the word lead not a soul into Christ himself, that soul hath no foundation. Though thou hear the word, though thou know the word, yea, suppose thou couldst teach others, and instruct the ignorant, yet all that will be no foundation, as good as none, except thou do it. And what is it to do the word; but believe in him, whom the word testifies of. This is the work of God, to resign thy soul to his mercies and merits, and have no confidence in the flesh: to scrape out all the rubbish of works and performances, and parts, out of the foundation, and singly to roll thy soul's weight upon God's promises, and Christ's purchase; to look, with Paul, on all things beside in thee and about thee, as dung and dross, that thou can lean no weight upon, and to remove that dunghill from the foundation of thy hope, that Jesus Christ may be the only foundation of thy soul, as God hath laid him in the church for a sure foundation "that whoso believeth in him may not be ashamed." Whatever beside a soul be established on, though it appear very solid, and the soul be settled and fixed upon it, yet a day will come that will unsettle that soul, and raze that foundation. Either it shall be now done in thy conscience, or it must be done at length, when that great tempest of God's indignation shall blow from heaven against all unrighteousness of men, in the day of accounts. Then shall thy house fall, and the fall of it shall be great. But a soul established upon the sure promises and upon Christ, in whom they are yea and amen, shall abide that storm, and in that day have confidence before God, have wherewith to answer, in Jesus Christ, all the challenges of divine justice, and the accusations of conscience; "he that trusts in him shall be as mount Sion, which cannot be moved." You see all things else change, and therefore men's hopes and joys perish. Even here, the temptations and revolutions of the times undermine their confidence and joy; and the blasts of the northern wind of affliction blow away their hopes.

Now, as Christ is the foundation, so he is the corner-stone of the building. It is Christ who hath removed that partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles, even the ceremonies of the one, and the atheism of the other; "he is our peace," who hath made two one. The two sides of the house of God are united by this corner-stone, Jesus Christ. Thus we, who were the temples of Satan, are made the temples of God. Thus poor stranger Gentiles, who had no interest in the covenant of promises, come to share with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to be founded upon the doctrine of the prophets, who taught the Jewish Church. Christ is the bond of Christians; this is the head into which all the members should grow up into a body. Distance of place, difference of nations, distinction of languages, all these cannot separate the members of Jesus Christ. They are more one, though consisting of divers nations, tongues, and customs, and dispositions, than the people of one nation, or children of one family; for one Lord, one spirit, unites all. Alas, that all are not united in affection and judgment! Why do the sides of this house contend, and wrestle one against another, when there is such a corner-stone joining them together? Are not there many Christians who cannot endure to look upon one another, who are yet both placed in one building of the temple of God? Alas, this is sad and shameful! But that which I would especially have observed in this, is, that Jesus Christ is such a foundation that reacheth throughout the whole building, and immediately toucheth every stone of the building. 'Tis such a foundation as riseth from the bottom to the top; and therefore Jesus Christ is both the author and finisher of our faith, the beginning and the end. The first stone and the last stone of our building must rise upon him, and by him; the least degree of grace and the greatest perfection of it, both are in him; and therefore Christians should be most dependent creatures, dependent in their first being, and in after well-being, in their being, and growing, wholly dependent upon Christ, that out of his fulness they may receive grace, and

then more grace for grace, that all may appear to be grace indeed. Now, I beseech you, my beloved in the Lord, to know whereupon ye are builded, or ought to be builded. There are two great errors in the time, take heed of them; one is the doctrine of some, and another is the practice of the most part. Some do prefer their own fancies and night-dreams, and the imaginations of their own heart, to the word of God; and upon pretence of revelation of new light, do cast a mist upon that word of God, which is a light that hath shined from the beginning. Be not deceived, but try the spirits whether they be of God, or not. There are many pretend to much of the Spirit, and therefore cry out against the word, as letter, as flesh. But, my brethren, believe not every doctrine that calls itself a spirit. That spirit is not of God, that hears not God's voice, as Christ reasoneth against the Jews. Seek ye more of the Spirit of Christ which he promiseth, who is a Spirit that teacheth all things, and bringeth to remembrance these blessed sayings, and leads us in all truth. It shall be both safest and sweetest to you to meditate on that word of the prophets and apostles, and the entrance into it shall give you light. An old light which was from the beginning, and therefore a true light, (for all truth is eternal) and yet a new light to your sense and feeling. It is both an old command, and a new command; an old word, and a new word; if thou search it by the Spirit's inspiration, that old word shall be made new, that letter made spirit and life. Such are the words that Christ speaks. But yet there are many who do not reject the Scriptures in judgment, who, notwithstanding, do not build on them in practice. Alas, it may be said of the most part of professed Christians among us, that they are not builded upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, but upon the sayings of fallible and weak men! What ground have many of you for your faith; but because the minister saith so, you believe so? The most part live in an implicit faith, and practise that in themselves, which they condemn in the papists. You do not labour to search the Scrip-

tures, that upon that foundation you may build your faith in the questioned truths of this age, that so you may be able to answer to those that ask a reason of the faith that is in you. Alas! simple souls, you believe every thing, and yet really believe nothing, because you believe not the word, as the word of the living God, but take it from men upon their authority! Therefore when a temptation cometh, when any gainsayings of the truth, you cannot stand against it, because your faith hath no foundation but the sayings of men, or acts of assemblies. And therefore, as men whom you trust with holding out light unto you, hold out darkness instead of light, you embrace that darkness also. But, I beseech you, be builded upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, not upon them, but upon that whereon they were builded, the infallible truths of God. You have the Scriptures, search them; since you have reasonable souls, search them. Other men's faith will not save; you cannot see to walk to heaven by other men's light, more than you can see by their eyes. You have eyes of your own, souls of your own, subordinate to none but the God of spirits, and the Lord of consciences Jesus Christ: and therefore examine all that is spoken to you from the word, according to the word, and receive no more upon trust from men, but as you find it upon trial to be the truth of God.

VI.

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH: THE RUIN AND RECOVERY OF MAN: FAITH AND LOVE TOWARDS CHRIST.

2 Tim. i. 13.—Hold fast that form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

HERE is the sum of religion. Here you have a compend of the doctrine of the Scriptures. All divine truths may be reduced to these two heads,—faith and love; what we

ought to believe, and what we ought to do. This is all the Scriptures teach, and this is all we have to learn. What have we to know, but what God hath revealed of himself to us? And what have we to do, but what he commands us? In a word, what have we to learn in this world, but to believe in Christ, and love him, and so live to him? This is the duty of man, and this is the dignity of man, and the way to eternal life. Therefore the Scriptures, that are given to be a lamp to our feet, and a guide to our paths, contain a perfect and exact rule, *credendorum, et faciendorum*, of faith and manners; of doctrine and practice. We have in the Scriptures many truths revealed to us of God, and of the works of his hands,—many precious truths. But that which most of all concerns us, is to know God and ourselves. This is the special excellency of the reasonable creature, that it is made capable to know its Creator, and to reflect upon its own being. Now, we have to know ourselves, what we are now, and what man once was; and accordingly to know of God, what he once revealed of himself, and what he doth now reveal. I say, the Scriptures hold out to our consideration a two-fold estate of mankind, and according to these, a two-fold revelation of the mystery of God. We look on man now, and we find him another thing than he was once; but we do not find God one thing at one time, and another thing at another time; for there is no shadow of change in him, and "he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Therefore we ask not, what he was, and what he is now, but how he manifests himself differently, according to the different estates of man. As we find in the Scriptures, man once righteous and blessed, Eccles. vii. 29. and God making him such according to his own image, Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24. "in righteousness and true holiness," we find him in communion and friendship with God, set next to the divine majesty, and above the works of his hand, and all things under his feet. How holy was he! and how happy! And happy he could not chuse but be, since he was holy, being conformed, and like unto God in his will

and affection, choosing that same delight, that same pleasure with God, in his understanding, knowing God and his will; and likewise, his own happiness. In such a conformity he could not but have much communion with him, that had such conformity to him, union being the foundation of communion, and great peace and solid tranquillity in him.

Now, in this state of mankind God expresses his goodness, and wisdom, and power, his holiness and righteousness. These are the attributes that shine most brightly. In the very morning of the creation, God revealed himself to man as a holy and just God, whose eyes could behold no iniquity; and therefore he made him upright, and made a covenant of life and peace with him, to give him immortal and eternal life; to continue him in his happy estate, if so be he continued in well-doing, Rom. x. 5, "do this and live." In which covenant, indeed, there were some out-breakings of the glorious grace and free condescendency of God; for it was no less free grace and undeserved favour, to promise life to his obedience, than now to promise life to our faith. So that if the Lord had continued that covenant with us, we ought to have called it grace, and would have been saved by grace as well as now; though it be true, that there is some more occasion given to man's nature to boast and glory in that way, yet not at all before God, Rom. iv. 2.

But we have scarcely found man in such an estate, till we have found him sinful and miserable, and fallen from his excellency. That sun shined in the dawning of the creation; but before ye can well know what it is, 'tis eclipsed, and darkened with sin and misery; as if the Lord had only set up such a creature in the firmament of glory, to let him know how blessed he could make him, and wherein his blessedness consists; and then presently to throw him down from his excellency. When you find him mounting up to the heavens, and spreading himself thus in holiness and happiness, like a bay-tree; behold again, and you find him not; though you seek him, you

shall not find him, his place doth not know him. He is like one that comes out with a great majesty upon a stage, and personates some monarch, or emperor, in the world, and then ere you can well gather your thoughts, to know what he is, he is turned off the stage, and appears in some base and despicable appearance. So quickly is man stript of all those glorious ornaments of holiness, and puts on the vile rags of sin and wretchedness, and is cast from the throne of eminency above the creatures, and from fellowship with God, to be a slave and servant to the dust of his feet, and to have communion with the devil and his angels. And now, ye have man holden out in Scripture as the only wretched piece of the creation, as the very plague of the world; the whole creation groaning under him, Rom. viii. and in pain to be delivered of such a burden, of such an execration, and curse, and astonishment. You find the testimony of the word condemns him altogether, concludes him under sin, and then under a curse, and makes all flesh guilty in God's sight. The word speaks otherwise of us than we think of ourselves, "Their imagination is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. O then, what must our affections be, that are certainly more corrupt! What then must our way be! All flesh hath corrupted their way, and done abominable works, and "none doth good," Psal. xiv. 1, 2, 3. But many flee in unto their good hearts, as their last refuge, when they are beaten from these outworks of their actions and ways. But the Scripture shall storm that also; "the heart is deceitful above all things: who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9; it is "desperately wicked." In a word, man is become the most lamentable spectacle in the world; a compend of all wickedness and misery inclosed within the walls of inability and impossibility to help himself, shut up within a prison of despair, a stinking, loathsome, and irksome dungeon. 'Tis like the miry pit that Jeremiah was cast into, that there was no out-coming, and no pleasant abode in it.

Now, man's estate being thus, nay, having made him

self thus, and sought out to himself such sad inventions, Eccl. vii. 29. and having destroyed himself, Hos. xiii. 9; what think ye? Should any pity him? If he had fallen into such a pit of misery ignorantly and unwittingly, he had been an object of compassion; but having cast himself head-long into it, who should have pity on him? Or, who should go aside to ask how he did, or bemoan him? Jer. xv. 5. But behold the Lord pities man as a father doth his children, Psal. ciii. His compassions fail not; he comes by such a loathsome and contemptible object, and casts his skirts over it, and saith, live! Ezek. xvi.; and maketh it a time of love. I say, no flesh could have expected any more of God, than to make man happy and holy, and to promise him life in well-doing. But to repair that happiness after 'tis wilfully lost, and to give life to evil-doers and sinners, O how far was it from Adam's expectation when he fled from God! Here then is the wonder, that when men and angels were in expectation of the revelation of his wrath from heaven against their wickedness, and the execution of the curse man was concluded under, that even then God is pursuing man, and pursues him with love, and opens up to him his very heart and bowels of love in Jesus Christ! Behold then the second revelation and manifestation of God, in a way of grace, pure grace, of mercy and pity towards lost sinners. The kindness of God hath appeared, not by works, but according to his abundant mercy shewed in Christ Jesus, Tit. iii. 4, 5. So then, we have this purpose of God's love unfolded to us in the Scriptures; and this is the substance of them, both Old and New Testament, or the end of them, Rom. x. 4. Christ is the end of the law to all sinners concluded under sin, and a curse. By it, our Lord Jesus, the good Ebedmelech, comes and casts down a cord to us, and draws us up out of the pit of sin and misery. He comes to this prison, and opens the doors to let captives free. So then we have God holden out to us as a redeemer, as a repairer of our breaches; God in Christ reconciling the world—" O Israel thou hast

destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found," Hos. xiii. 9. He finds to himself a ransom to satisfy his justice, Job xxxiii. 24. He finds a propitiation to take away sin, a sacrifice to pacify and appease his wrath. He finds one of our brethren, but yet his own Son in whom he is well-pleased; and then holds out all this to sinners, that they may be satisfied in their own consciences, as he is in his own mind. God hath satisfied himself in Christ; you have not that to do. He is not now to be reconciled to us, for he was never really at odds, though he covered his countenance with frowns and threats, since the fall, and hath appeared in fire, and thunders, and whirlwinds, which are terrible, yet his heart had always love in it to such persons; and therefore he is come near in Christ, and about reconciling us to himself. Here is the business then, to have our souls reconciled to him, to take away the enmity within us; and as he is satisfied with his Son, so to satisfy ourselves with him, and be as well-pleased in his redemption and purchase, as the Father is, and then you believe indeed in him. Now if this were accomplished, what have we more to do, but to love him, and to live to him? When you have found in the Scripture, and believed with the heart, what man once was, and what he now is; what God once appeared, and what he now manifests himself in the gospel, ye have no more to do, but to search in the same Scriptures what ye henceforth ought to be. Ye who find your estate recovered in Christ, ask, "What manner of persons ought we to be?" And the Scripture shall also give you that form of sound words, which may not only teach you to believe in him, but to love him, and obey his commands. The law that before condemned you is now by Christ put in your hands to guide you, and conduct you in the way, and teacheth you how to live henceforth to his glory. The grace of God that hath appeared unto all men, Tit. ii. 12. "teacheth us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live godly, and righteously, and soberly in this present world." Here is the sum of the rule of your practice and conver-

sation; piety towards God, equity towards men, and sobriety towards ourselves,—self-denial, and world-denial, and lust-denial; to give up with the world, and our own lusts, henceforth to have no more to do with them; to resign them, not for a time, not in part, but wholly, and for ever in affection, and by parts in practice and endeavour; and then to resign and give up ourselves to him, to live to him, and to live in him.

Thus we have given you a sum of the doctrine of the Scriptures, of that which is to be believed, and that which is to be done as our duty. Now we shall speak a word of these two cardinal graces, which are the compend of all graces, as the objects of them are the abridgment of the Scriptures—faith and love. These sound words can profit us nothing, unless we hold them fast with faith and love.

Faith is like the fountain-gate. Streams come out of it that cleanse the conscience from the guilt of sin, and purify the heart from the filth of sin; because it is that which cometh to the "fountain opened up in the house of David," and draweth water out of these "wells of salvation." If you consider the fall and ruin of mankind, you will find infidelity and unbelief the fountain of it, as well as the seal of it. Unbelief of the law of God, of his promises and threatenings. This was first called in question, and when once called in question, it is half denied. Hath God said so, that you shall die? 'Tis not far off, —"you shall not surely die." Here then was the very beginning of man's ruin. He did not retain in his knowledge, and believe with his heart, the truth and faithfulness, and holiness of God; which unbelief was conjoined and intermingled with much pride—"you shall be as gods." He began to live out of God, in himself, not remembering that his life was a stream of that divine fountain, that being cut off from it, would dry up. Now, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, an expert Saviour, and very learned, and complete for this work, he brings man out of this pit of misery, by that same way he fell into it.

He fell down by unbelief, and he brings him up out of it by faith. This is the cord that is cast down to the poor soul in the dungeon, or rather his faith is the dead-grip of the cord of divine promises, which are sent unto the captive prisoner, and by virtue thereof he is drawn out into the light of salvation. Unbelief of the law of God did first destroy man; now the belief of the gospel saves him. The not-believing of the Lord's threatenings, was the beginning of his ruin; and believing of his precious promises is salvation. I say no more, as our destruction began at the unbelief of the law, so our salvation must begin at the belief of it. The law and divine justice went out of his sight, and so he sinned; now the law entering into the conscience, discovers a man's sins, and makes sin abound, and that is the beginning of our remedy, to know our disease. But as long as this is hid from a man's eyes, he is shut up in unbelief; he is sealed and confirmed in his miserable estate, and so kept from Jesus Christ the remedy. Thus, unbelief first and last destroys. Faith might have preserved Adam, and faith again may restore thee, who hast fallen in Adam.

There is a great mistake of faith among us, some taking it for a strong and blind confidence, that admits of no questions or doubts in the soul, and so vainly persuading themselves that they have it; and some again conceiving it to be such an assurance of salvation, as instantly comforts the soul, and looseth all objections, and so foolishly vexing their own souls, and disquieting themselves in vain, for the want of that which, if they understood what it is, they would find they have it. I say, many souls conceive that to be the best faith, that never doubted, and hath always lodged in them, and kept them in peace since they were born. But, seeing all men were once "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, and without God in the world," and so without Christ also, it is certain that those souls who have always blest themselves in their own hearts, and cried peace, peace, and were never afraid of the wrath to come,

have embraced an imagination and dream of their own heart, for true faith. It is not big and stout words that will prove it. Men may defy the devil and all his works, and speak very confidently, and yet, God knows, they are captives by him, at his pleasure, and not far from that misery which they think they have escaped. Satan works in them with such a crafty conveyance, that they cannot perceive it, and how should they perceive it? For we are by nature dead in sins, and so cannot feel or know that we are such. It is a token of life to feel pain, a certain token, for dead things are senseless. You know how jugglers may deceive your very senses, and make them believe they see that which is not, and feel that which they feel not. Oh! how much more easy is it for Satan, such an genious and experimented spirit, assisted with the help of our deceitful hearts, to cast such a mist over the eyes of hearts, and make them believe any thing? How easily may he hide our misery from us, and make us believe 'tis well with us? And thus multitudes of souls perish, in the very opinion of salvation. That very thing which they call faith, that strong ungrounded persuasion, 'tis no other thing than the unbelief of the heart,—unbelief, I mean, of the holy law, of divine justice, and the wrath to come; for if these once entered into the soul's consideration, they would certainly cast down that stronghold of vain confidence, that Satan keeps all the house in peace by. Now this secure and presumptuous despising of all threatenings and all convictions, is varnished over to the poor soul, with the colour and appearance of faith in the gospel. They think, to believe in Christ, is nothing else but never to be afraid of hell; whereas it is nothing else, but a soul fleeing into Christ for fear of hell; and fleeing from the wrath to come to the city of refuge.

Now again, there are some other souls quite contrary minded, that run upon another extremity. They once question whether they have faith; and always question it. You shall find them always out of one doubt into another, and still returning upon these debates, Whether am

I in Christ, or not? and often peremptorily concluding that they are not in him, and that they believe not in him. I must confess, that a soul must once question the matter, or they shall never be certain. Nay, a soul must once conclude that it is void of God, and without Christ; but having discovered that, I see no more use and fruit of your frequent debates, and janglings about interest. I would say then, unto such souls, that if you now question it, it is indeed the very time to put it out of question. And how? Not by framing or seeking answers to your objections, not by searching into thyself to find something to prove it, not by mere disputing about it, for when shall these have an end? But simply and plainly by setting about that which is questioned. Are you in doubt, if you be believers? How shall it be resolved then, but by believing indeed? It is now the very time thou art called to make application of thy soul to Christ, if thou thinkest that thou cannot make application of Christ to thy soul. If thou cannot know if he be thine, then how shalt thou know it, but by choosing him for thine, and embracing him in thy soul? Now I say, if that time which is spent about such unprofitable debates, were spent in solid and serious endeavours about the thing in debate, it would quickly be out of debate. If you were more in the obedience to those commands, than in the dispute, whether you have obeyed or not, you would sooner come to satisfaction in it. This I say the rather, because the weightier and principal parts of the gospel, are those direct acts of faith and love to Jesus Christ; both these are the outgoings of the soul to him. Now again, examination of our faith and assurance are but secondary and consequent reflections upon ourselves, and are the soul returning in again to itself, to find what is within. Therefore, I say, a Christian is principally called to the first, and always called. It is the chief duty of man, which, for no evidence, no doubting, no questioning, should be left undone. If ye be in any hesitation whether you are believers or not; I am sure the chiefest thing, and most concerning,

is, rather to believe than to know it. It is a Christian's being to believe; 'tis indeed his comfort and well-being to know it; but if you do not know it, then by all means so much the more, set about it presently. Let the soul consider Christ and the precious promises, and lay its weight upon him; this you ought to do, and not to leave the other undone.

Secondly, I say to such souls, that it is the mistake of the very nature of faith that leads them to such perplexities, and causeth such inevidence. It is not so much the inevidence of marks and fruits, that makes them doubt, as the misapprehension of the thing itself; for as long as they mistake it in its own nature, no sign, no mark, can satisfy in it. You take faith to be a persuasion of God's love that calms and quiets the mind. Now, such a persuasion needs no sign to know it by; 'tis manifest by its own presence, as light by its own brightness. It were a foolish question to ask any, how they knew that they were persuaded of another's affection? The very persuasion maketh itself more certain to the soul than any token. So then, while you question whether you have faith or not, and in the mean time take faith to be nothing else but such a persuasion, it is in vain to bring any marks or signs to convince you that you have faith; for if such a persuasion and assurance were in you, it would be more powerful to assure your hearts of itself than any thing else; and while you are doubting of it, it is more manifest that you have it not, than any signs or marks can be able to make it appear that you have it. If any would labour to convince a blind man that he saw the light, and gave him signs and tokens of the light's shining, the blind man could not believe him, for it is more certain to himself that he sees not, than any evidence can make the contrary probable. You are still wishing and seeking such a faith as puts all out of question. Now, when ministers bring any marks to prove you have true faith, it cannot satisfy or settle you, because your very questioning proves, that ye have not that which ye question. If you had such a persuasion, you would not question it. So then, as long as

you are in that mistake concerning the true nature of faith, all the signs of the word cannot settle you.

But, I say, if once you understood the true nature of faith, it would be more clear in itself unto you, than readily marks and signs could make it, especially in the time of temptation. If you would know, then, what it is indeed, consider what the word of God holds out concerning himself, or us, and the solid belief of that in the heart hath something of the nature of saving faith in it. The Lord gives a testimony concerning man, that he is born in sin, that he is dead in sins, and all his imaginations are only evil continually. Now, I say, to receive this truth into the soul upon God's testimony is a point of faith. The Lord in his word concludes all under sin and wrath; so, then, for a soul to conclude itself also under sin and wrath, is a point of faith. Faith is the soul's testimony to God's truth, the word is God's testimony. Now then, if a soul receive this testimony within, whether it be law or gospel, 'tis an act of faith. If a soul condemn itself, and judge itself, that is a setting to our seal that God is true, who speaks in his law, and so 'tis a believing in God. I say more, to believe with the heart, that we cannot believe, is a great point of sound belief, because 'tis a sealing of that word of God,—"The heart is desperately wicked, and of ourselves we can do nothing." Now, I am persuaded, if such souls knew this, they would put an end to their many contentions and wranglings about this point, and would rather bless God that hath opened their eyes to see themselves, than contend with him for that they have no faith. It is light only that discovers darkness, and faith only that discerns unbelief. It is life and health only that feel pain and sickness; for if all were alike, nothing could be found, [*i.e.* felt] as in dead bodies. Now, I say to such souls as believe in God the Lawgiver, believe also in Christ the Redeemer; and what is that? 'Tis not to know that I have interest in him: no, that must come after; 'tis the Spirit's sealing after believing which puts itself out of question when it comes. And so if you had

it, you needed not many signs to know it by, at least you would not doubt of it, more than he that sees the light can question it. But I say, to believe in Christ is simply this; I, whatsoever I be, ungodly, wretched, polluted, desperate, am willing to have Jesus Christ for my Saviour,—I have no other help, or hope, if it be not in him. It is, I say, to lean the weight of thy soul on this foundation-stone laid in Zion, to embrace the promises of the gospel, albeit general as "worthy of all acceptation," and wait upon the performance of them. It is no other thing but to make Christ welcome, to say, "even so, Lord Jesus," I am content in my soul that thou be my Saviour, to be found in thee, "not having my own righteousness." I am well pleased to cast away my own as dung, and find myself no other than an ungodly man. Now it is certain that many souls that are still questioning whether they have faith, yet do find this in their souls, but because they know not that it is faith which they find, they go about to seek that which is not faith, and where it is not to be found, and so disquiet themselves in vain, and hinder fruitfulness.

Now, the faith of a Christian is no fancy; 'tis not a light vain imagination of the brain, but it dwells in the heart, ("with the heart man believes,") and it dwells with love. Faith and love, we need not be curious to distinguish them. It is certain that love is in it, and from it; 'tis in the very bosom of it, because faith is a soul embracing of Christ; 'tis a chusing of him for its portion; and then upon the review of this goodly portion, and from consideration of what he is, and hath done for us, the soul loves him still more, and is impatient of so much distance from him. We find them conjoined in Scripture, but they are one in the heart. O that we studied to have these jointly engraven on the heart! as they are joined in the word, so our heart should be a living epistle. Faith and love are two words, but one thing under different notions. They are the out-goings of the soul to Christ for life, the breathings of the soul after him, for more of him, when it

hath once tasted how good he is. Faith is not a speculation, or a wandering thought of truth; 'tis the truth not captivated into the mind, but dwelling in the heart, and getting possession of the whole man. You know, a man and his will are one, not so a man and his mind, for he may conceive the truth of many things he loves not, but whatever a man loves, that and he, in a manner become one with another. Love is unitive, 'tis the most excellent union of distant things. The will commands the whole man, and hath the office of applying of all the faculties to their proper works, *Illa imperat, aliæ exsequuntur.* Therefore when once divine truth gets entry into the heart of a man, and becomes one with his will and affection, it will quickly command the whole man to practise and execute; and then he that received the truth in love, is found a walker in the truth. Many persons captivate truth in their understandings, as the Gentiles did. They hold or detain it in unrighteousness; but because it hath no liberty to descend into the heart, and possess that garrison, it cannot command the man. But oh! 'tis better to be truth's captive, than to captivate truth; saith the apostle, "ye obeyed from the heart the truth to which ye were delivered," Rom. vi. O a blessed captivity! to be delivered over to truth; that is indeed freedom, "for truth makes free," John viii. And it makes free where it is in freedom. Give it freedom to command thee, and it shall indeed deliver thee from all strange lords; and thou shalt obey it from the heart, when it is indeed in the heart. When the truth of God, whether promises, or threatenings, or commands, are impressed into the heart, you shall find the expressions of them in the conversation. Faith is not an empty assent to the truth, but a receiving of it in love, and when the truth is received in love, then it begins to work by love. "Faith works by love," saith Paul, Gal. v. 6. That now is the proper nature of its operation, which expresses its own nature. Obedience proceeding from love to God, flows from faith in God, and that shews the true and living nature of that faith. If the soul with-

in receive the seal and impression of the truth of God, it will render the image of that same truth in all its actions.

Love is put for all obedience. 'Tis made the very sum and compend of the law, the fulfilling of it; for the truth is the most effectual and constraining principle of obedience, and withal the most sweet and pleasant. The love of Christ constrains us to live to him, and not henceforth to ourselves, 2 Cor. v. 15. As I said, a man and his will is one; if you engage it, you bind all; if you gain it, it will bring all with it. As it is the most ready way to gain any party, to engage their head whom they follow, and upon whom they depend; let a man's love be once gained to Christ, and the whole train of the soul's faculties, of the outward senses and operations, will follow upon it. It was an excellent and pertinent question, that Christ asked Peter, when he was going away, (if Peter had considered Christ's purpose in it, he would not have been so hasty and displeased,) "Peter, lovest thou me?" then feed my sheep. If a man love Christ, he will certainly study to please him, and though he should do never so much in obedience, 'tis no pleasure except it be done out of love. O this, and more of this in the heart, would make ministers feed well, and teach well, and would make people obey well! "If ye love me, keep my commands." Love devotes and consecrates all that is in a man to the pleasure of him whom he loves; therefore it fashions and conforms one even against nature to another's humour and affection. It constrains not to live to ourselves, but to him,—its joy and delight is in him, and therefore all is given up and resigned to him. Now as it is certain, that if you love much you will do much, so it is certain that little is accepted for much, that proceeds from love, and therefore, our poor maimed and halting obedience is called the "fulfilling of the law." He is well-pleased with it, because love is ill-pleased with it. Love thinks nothing too much, all too little, and therefore his love thinks any thing from us much, since love would give more. He accepts that which is given; the lover's mite cast into the

treasure, is more than ten times so much outward obedience from another man. He meets love with love. If the soul's desire be towards the love of his name; if love offer, though a farthing, his love receiving it, counts it a crown. Love offering a present of duty, finds many imperfections in it, and covers any good that is in it, seems not to regard it, and then beholds it as a recompense. His love receiving the present from us, covers a multitude of infirmities that are in it. And thus, what in the desire and endeavour of love on our part, and what in the acceptation of what is done on his part, love is the fulfilling of the law. It is an usual proverb, all things are as they are taken. Love is the fulfilling of the law, because our loving Father takes it so; he takes as much delight in the poor children's willingness, as in the more aged's strength; the offer and endeavour of the one pleaseth him, as well as the performance of the other.

The love of God is the fulfilling of the law, for it is a living law; it is the law written on the heart; it is the law of a spirit of life within. *Quis legem det amantibus? Major lex amor sibi ipsi est.* You almost need not prescribe any rules, or set over the head of love, the authority and pain of a command, for it is a greater law to itself. It hath within its own bosom, as deep an engagement and obligation to any thing that may please God, as you can put upon it; for it is in itself the very engagement and bond of the soul to him. This is it indeed which will do him service, and that is the service which he likes. It is that only serves him constantly and pleasantly; and constantly it cannot serve him, which doth it not pleasantly, for it is delight only that makes it constant. Violent motions may be swift, but not durable—they last not long. Fear and terror is a kind of external impulse, that may drive a soul swiftly to some duty; but because that is not one with the soul, it cannot endure long; it is not good company to the soul. But love, making a duty pleasant, becomes one with the soul; it incorporates with it, and becomes like its nature to it, that though it should not

move so swiftly, yet it moves more constantly. And what is love but the very motion of the soul to God? And so till it have attained that, to be in him, it can find no place of rest. Now this is only the service that he is pleased with, which comes from love, because he sees his own image in it; for love in us, is nothing else but the impression and stamp that God's love to us makes on the heart. It is the very reflection of that sweet warm beam. So then, when his love reflects back unto himself, carrying our heart and duty with it, he knoweth his own superscription, he loves his own image in such a duty: He that loveth me, and continueth in my love, I will love him, and I and my Father will come and make our abode with him, John xiv. 23. Here now is an evidence that he likes it, for he must needs like that place he chooses to dwell in. He who hath such a glorious mansion and palace above, must needs love that soul dearly, that he will prefer it to his high and holy place.

Now I know it will be the secret question and complaint of some souls, how shall I get love to God? I cannot love him, my heart is so desperately wicked; I cannot say as Peter, "Lord thou knowest that I love thee." I shall not insist upon the discovery of your love unto him by marks and signs; only I say, if thou indeed from thy heart desirest to love him, and art grieved that there is not this love in thy soul to him, which becomes so love-worthy a Saviour, then thou indeed lovest him, for he that loveth the love of God, loveth God himself. And wherefore art thou sad for the want of that love, but because thou lovest him in some measure, and withal findest him beyond all that thou canst think and love? But I say, that which most concerns thee is, to love still more, and that thou wouldst be still more earnest to love him, than to know that thou lovest him.

Now I know no more effectual way to increase love to Jesus Christ, than to believe his love. Christ Jesus is the author and finisher both of faith and love; and we love him, because he first loved us. Therefore the right dis-

covery of Jesus Christ, what he is, and what he hath done for sinners, is that which will of all things most prevail, to engage the soul unto him. But as long as ye suspend your faith upon the being or increase of your love and obedience, as the manner of too many is, you take even such a course as he that will not plant the tree till he see the fruits of it; which is contrary to common sense and reason.

Since this, then, is the sum of true religion, to believe in Christ, and to love him, and so live to him; we shall wind up all that is spoken, into that exhortation of the apostle's, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard." You have this doctrine of faith and love delivered unto you, which may be able to save your souls. Then, I beseech you, hold them fast, salvation is in them. They are sound words, and wholesome words; words of life, spirit and life, (as Christ speaks) as well as words of truth. But how will you hold them fast that have them not at all, that know them not though you hear them? You who are ignorant of the gospel, and hear nothing but a sound of words, instead of sound and wholesome words, how can you hold them fast? Can a man hold the wind in the hollow of his hand, or keep a sound within it? You know no more but a sound, and a wind that passeth by your ear, without observing either truth or life in it. But then again, you who understand these sound words, and have a form of knowledge, and of the letter of the law, what will that avail you? You cannot hold it fast, except you have it within you, and it is within you indeed when it is in your heart,—when the form of it is engraven upon the very soul in love. Now, though you understand the sound of these words, and the sound of truth in them, yet you receive not the living image of them, which is faith and love. Can you paint a sound? Can you form it, or engrave it on any thing? Nay, but these sound words are more substantial and solid. They must be engraven on the heart, else you will never hold them. They may be easily plucked out of the mouth and hand, by tempta-

tion, unless they be enclosed, and laid up in the secret of the heart, as Mary laid them. The truth must hold thee fast, or thou canst not hold it fast; it must captivate thee, and bind thee with the golden chains of affection, which only is true freedom, or certainly thou wilt let it go. Nay, you must not only have the truth received by love into your heart, but, as the apostle speaks, you must also "hold fast the form of sound words." Scripture words are sound words; the Scripture method of teaching is sound and wholesome. There may be unsound words used in expressing true matter; and if a man shall give liberty to his own luxuriant imagination, to expatiate in notions and expressions, either to catch the ear of the vulgar, or to appear some new discoverer of light and gospel-mysteries, he may as readily fall into error and darkness, as into truth and light. Some men do busk up old truths, Scripture truths, into some new dress of language and notions, and then give them out for new discoveries, new lights; but in so doing, they often hazard the losing of the truth itself. We should beware and take heed of strange words, that have the least appearance of evil, such as Christed, and Godded; let us think it enough to be wise according to the Scriptures, and suspect all that as vain, empty, unsound, that tends not to the increase of faith in Christ and love and obedience unto him; as ordinarily the dialect of those called Antinomians is. Giving, and not granting, that they had no unsound mind, yet I am sure they use unsound words to express sound matter. The clothes should be shaped to the person. Truth is plain and simple, let words of truth also be full of simplicity. I say no more, but leave that upon you, that you hold fast even the very words of the Scriptures, and be not bewitched by the vain pretensions of spirit, all spirit, pure and spiritual service, and such like, to the casting off of the word of truth, as *letter*, as *flesh;* and such is the high attainment of some in these days, an high attainment indeed, and a mighty progress in the way to destruction, the very last discovery of that Antichrist and man of sin.

Oh! make much of the Scripture, for you shall neither read nor hear the like of it in the world! Other books may have sound matter, but there is still something, in manner or words, unsound. No man can speak to you truth in such plainness and simplicity, in such soundness also. But here is both sound matter, and sound words; the truth holden out truly; health and salvation holden out in as wholesome a manner as is possible. Matter and manner are both divine.

VII.

UNSEARCHABLENESS AND PERFECTION OF GOD.

Exod. iii. 13, 14.—When they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say? And God said, I AM THAT I AM.

We are now about this question, what God is. But who can answer it? Or, if answered, who can understand it? It should astonish us in the very entry, to think that we are about to speak and to hear of his majesty, "whom eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," nor hath it entered into the heart of any creature to consider what he is. Think ye that blind men could have a pertinent discourse of light and colours? Would they form any suitable notion of that they had never seen, and which cannot be known but by seeing? What an ignorant speech would a deaf man make of sound, which a man cannot so much as know what it is, but by hearing of it? How then can we speak of God, who dwells in such inaccessible light, that, though we had our eyes opened, yet they are far less proportioned to that resplendent brightness, than a blind eye is to the sun's light?

It uses to be a question, if there be a God? Or, how it may be known that there is a God? It were almost blasphemy to move such a question, if there were not so much atheism in the hearts of men, which makes us

either to doubt, or not firmly to believe, and seriously to consider it. But what may convince souls of the divine Majesty? Truly, I think, if it be not evident by its own brightness, all the reason that can be brought, is but like a candle's-light to see the sun by. Yet, because of our weakness, the Lord shines upon us in the creatures, as in a glass; and this is become the best way to take up the glorious brightness of his majesty, by reflection in his word and works. God himself dwells in light inaccessible, that no man can approach unto; if any look straight to that Sun of Righteousness, he shall be astonished and amazed, and see no more than in the very darkness. But the best way to behold the sun, is to look at it in a pail of water; and the surest way to know God by, is to take him up in a state of humiliation and condescension, as the sun in the rainbow, in his word and works, which are mirrors of the divine power and goodness, and do reflect upon the hearts and eyes of all men the beams of that uncreated light. If this be not the speech, "that day uttereth unto day, and night unto night," One self-Being gave me a being; and if thou hear not that language that is gone out into all the earth, and be not, as it were, noised and possessed with all the sounds of every thing about thee, above thee, beneath thee, yea, and within thee, all singing a melodious song to that excellent name which is above all names, and conspiring to give testimony to the fountain of their being; if this, I say, be not so sensible unto thee, as if a tongue and a voice were given to every creature to express it, then, indeed, we need not reason the business with thee who hast lostt hy senses. Do but, I say, retire inwardly, and ask in sobriety and sadness, what thy conscience thinks of it; and undoubtedly it shall confess a divine majesty; or at least, tremble at the apprehension of what it either will not confess or slenderly believes. The very evidence of truth shall extort an acknowledgment from it. If any man denied the divine majesty, I would seek no other argument to persuade him, than what was used to convince an old philosopher, who

denied the fire; they put his hand in it till he felt it. So, I say, return within to thy own conscience, and thou shalt find the scorching heat of that divine majesty, burning it up, whom thou wouldst not confess. There is an inward feeling and sense of God that is imprinted in every soul by nature, that leaves no man without such a testimony of God, that makes him without excuse; there is no man so impious, so atheistical, but whether he will or not, he shall feel at some times that which he loves not to know or consider of; so that what rest secure consciences have from the fear and terror of God, it is like the sleep of a drunken man, who, even when he sleeps, does not rest quietly.

Now, although this inward stamp of a deity be engraven on the minds of all, and every creature without have some marks of his glory stamped on them; so that all things a man can behold above him, or about him, or beneath him, the most mean and inconsiderable creatures, are pearls and transparent stones, that cast abroad the rays of that glorious brightness which shines on them; as if a man were enclosed into a city built all of precious stones, that in the sun-shine all and every parcel of it, the streets, the houses, the roofs, the windows, all of it, reflected into his eyes those sun-beams in such a manner, as if all had been one mirror. Though, I say, this be so, yet such is the blockishness and stupidity of men, that they do not, for all this, consider of the glorious Creator; so that all these lamps seem to be lighted in vain, to shew forth his glory; which, though they do every way display their beams upon us, that we can turn our eye nowhere, but such a ray shall penetrate it, yet we either do not consider it, or the consideration of it takes not such deep root as to lead home to God. Therefore the Scripture calls all natural men atheists, "They have said in their heart, there is no God," Psal. xiv. 1. All men almost confess a God with their mouth, and think they believe in him; but alas! behold their actions, and hearts, what testimony they give; for a man's walking and conversation is like an

eye-witness, that one of them deserves more credit than ten ear-witnesses of professions, *Plus valet oculatus testis unus, quam auriti decem.* Now, I may ask of you, what would ye do, how would ye walk, if ye believed there were no God? Would ye be more dissolute and profane, and more void of religion? Would not human laws bind you as much in that case as they now do? For that is almost all the restraint that is upon many,—the fear of temporal punishment, or shame among men. Set your walking beside a heathen's conversation, and save that you say, ye believe in the true God, and he denies him, there is no difference. Your transgressions speak louder than your professions, "that there is no fear of God before your eyes," Psal. xxxvi. 1. Your practice belies your profession, "you profess that you know God; but in works you deny him," saith Paul, Tit. i. 16. *Ore quod dicitis, opere negatis.*

In these words read in your audience, you have a strange question, and a strange answer; a question of Moses, and an answer of God. The occasion of it was the Lord's giving to Moses a strange and uncouth message. He was giving him commission to go and speak to a king to dismiss and let go six hundred thousand of his subjects; and to speak to a numerous nation, to depart from their own dwellings, and come out whither the Lord should lead them. Might not Moses then say within himself, who am I, to speak such a thing to a king? Who am I, to lead out such a mighty people? Who will believe that thou hast sent me? Will not all men call me a deceiver, an enthusiastical fellow, that take upon me such a thing? Well then, saith Moses to the Lord,—Lord, when I shall say, that the God of their fathers sent me unto them, they will not believe me; they have now forgotten thy majesty, and think that thou art but even like the vanities of the nations; they cannot know their own portion from other nations' vain idols; which they have given the same name unto, and call gods as well as thou art called. Now therefore, says he, when they ask me what thy proper

name is by which thou art distinguished from all idols, and all the works of thine own hands, and of men's hands, what shall I say unto them? Here is the question. But why askest thou my name, saith the Lord to Jacob? Gen. xxxii. 29. Importing, that it is high presumption, and bold curiosity, to search such a wonder; ask not my name, saith the angel to Manoah, for it is secret or wonderful, Judges xiii. 18. It is a mystery, a hidden mystery, not for want of light, but for too much light. It is a secret; it is wonderful; out of the reach of all created capacity; "thou shalt call his name Wonderful," Isa. ix. 6. What name can express that incomprehensible Majesty? The mind is more comprehensive than words, but the mind and soul is too narrow to conceive him. O then! how short a garment must all words, the most significant, and comprehensive, and superlative words be? Solomon's soul and heart was enlarged as the sand of the sea, but O it is not large enough for the Creator of it! "What is his name, or, what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" Prov. xxx. 4. The Lord himself expresses it to our capacity, because we are not capable of what he can express, much less of what he is. If he should speak to us of himself as he is, O! it should be dark sayings, hid from the understandings of all living. We could reach no more of it, but that it is a wonder, a secret. Here is the highest attainment of our knowledge, to know there is some mystery in it, but not what that mystery is. Christ hath a name above all names, how then can we know that name? It was well said by some of old, *Deus est* πολυωνυμος, and yet ἀνωνομος *multorum nominum, et tamen nullius nominis,* he hath all names, and yet he hath no name: *quia est omnia, et tamen nihil omnium,* because he is all in all, and yet none of all; *Deus est quod vides, et quod non vides.* You may call him by all the works of his hands, for these are beams of his uncreated light, and streams of his inexhaustible sea of goodness; so that whatever perfection is in them, all that is eminently, yea, infinitely in him. Therefore saith Christ,

"there is one good, even God:" and he calls himself the light and life; and therefore you have so many names of God in Scripture. There is no quality, no property, or virtue, that hath the least shadow of goodness, but he is that essentially, really, eternally, and principally, so that the creature deserves not such names, but as they participate of his fulness. He is the true light, the true life; the sun is not that true light, though it give light to the moon, and to men, for it borrows its light and shining from him. All creatures are and shine but by reflection; therefore these names do agree to them but by a metaphor, so to speak; the propriety and truth of them is in him. As it is but a borrowed kind of speech, to call a picture or image a man, only because of the representation and likeness to him, it communicates in one name with him; even so, in some manner, the creatures are but some shadows, pictures, or resemblances, and equivocal shapes of God; and whatever name they have, of good, wise, strong, beautiful, true, or such like, it's borrowed speech from God, whose image they have. And yet poor vain man would be wise,—thought wise really, intrinsically in himself, and properly,—calls himself so; which is as great an abuse of language, as if the picture should call itself a true and living man. But then, as you may call him all things, because he is eminently and gloriously all that is in all, the fountain and end of all; yet we must again deny that he is any of these things, *unus omnia, et nihil omnium*. We can find no name to him; or what can you call him, when you have said, he is light? You can form no other notion of him but from the resemblance of this created light; but alas! that he is not; he so infinitely transcends that, and is distant from it, as if he had never made it according to his likeness. His name is above all these names; but what it is himself knows, and knows only. If ye ask what he is, we may glance at some notions, and expressions, to hold him out. In relation to the creatures, we may call him Creator, Redeemer, Light, Life, Omnipotent, Good, Merciful, Just, and such like:

but if you ask, what is his proper name in relation to himself, *ipse novit,* himself knows that, we must be silent, and silence in such a subject is the rarest eloquence.

But let us hear what the Lord himself speaks, in answer to this question. If any can tell, sure he himself knows his own name best. "I am (saith he) what I am," *sum qui sum;* go tell them that I am hath sent thee. A strange answer, but an answer only pertinent for such a question. What should Moses make of this? What is he the wiser of his asking? Indeed he might be the wiser, it might teach him more by silence, than all human eloquence could instruct him by speaking. His question was curious, and behold an answer short and dark, to confound vain and presumptuous mortality. "I am what I am," an answer that does not satisfy curiosity, for it leaves room for the first question, and what art thou? But abundant to silence faith and sobriety, that it shall ask no more, but sit down and wonder.

There are three things I conceive imported in this name, God's unsearchableness, God's unchangeableness, and God's absoluteness. His ineffability, his eternity, and his sovereignty and independent subsistence, upon whom all other things depend. I say,

I. His unsearchableness. You know it is our manner of speech when we would cover any thing from any, and not answer any thing distinctly to them, we say, it is what it is; I have said what I have said; I will not make you wiser of it. Here then is the fittest notion you can take up God into, to find him unsearchable beyond all understanding, beyond all speaking. The more ye speak or think, to find him always beyond what ye speak or think; whatever you discover of him, to conceive, that infiniteness is beyond that, *ad finem cujus pertransire non potest,* the end of which you cannot reach; that he is an unmeasurable depth, a boundless ocean of perfection; that you can neither sound the bottom of it, nor find the breadth of it? Can a child wade the sea, or take it up in the hollow of its hand? Whenever any thing of God is

seen, he is seen a wonder, wonderful is the name he is known by. All our knowledge reacheth no farther than admiration, "who is like unto thee?" Exod. xv. 11. Psal. lxxxix. 6, 7., and admiration speaks ignorance. The greatest attainment of knowledge reacheth but to such a question as this, who is like to thee? to know only that he is not like any other thing that we know, but not to know what he is. And the different degrees of knowledge are but in more admiration or less, at his unconceivableness, and in more or less affection expressed in such pathetic interrogations, O who is like the Lord? How excellent is his name? Here is the greatest degree of saints' knowledge here-away, to ask with admiration and affection such a question, that no answer can be given to, or none that we can conceive or understand, so as to satisfy wondering, but such as still more encreaseth it. There is no other subject, but you may exceed it in apprehensions and in expressions. O how often are men's songs, and thoughts, and discourses above the matter! But here is a subject that there is no excess into, nay, there is no access unto it, let be excess in it. Imagination that can transcend the created heavens and earth, and fancy to itself millions of new worlds, every one exceeding another, and all of them exceeding this in perfection, yet it can do nothing here. That which at one instant can pass from the one end of heaven to the other, walk about the circumference of the heavens, and travel over the breadth of the sea, yet it can do nothing here. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Job xi. Imagination cannot travel in these bounds, for his centre is every where, and his circumference no where, as an old philosopher speaks of God; *Deus est, cujus centrum est ubique, circumferentia nusquam;* how shall it then find him out? There is nothing sure here, but to lose ourselves in a mystery, and to follow his majesty till we be swallowed up with an—Oh, *altitudo!* O the depth, and height, and length, and breadth of God! O the depth of his wisdom! O the height of his power! O the breadth

of his love! And O the length of his eternity! 'Tis not reason and disputation, saith Bernard, will comprehend these, but holiness; and that by stretching out the arms of fear and love, reverence and affection. What more dreadful, than power that cannot be resisted, and wisdom that none can be hid from; and what more lovely than the love wherewith he hath so loved us, and his unchangeableness which admits of suspicion? O fear him who hath a hand that doth all, and an eye that beholds all things, and love him who hath so loved us, and cannot change! God hath been the subject of the discourses and debates of men in all ages; but oh! *Quam longe est in rebus qui est tam communis in vocibus?* How little a portion have men understood of him? How hath he been hid from the eyes of all living? Every age must give this testimony of him,—we have heard of his fame, but he is hid from the eyes of all living. I think, that philosopher that took it to his advisement, said more in silence than all men have done in speaking. Simonides being asked by Hiero, a king, what God was, asked a day to deliberate in, and think upon it. When the king sought an account of his meditation about it, he desired yet two days more, and so as oft as the king asked him, he still doubled the number of the days in which he might advise upon it. The king wondering at this, asked what he meant by those delays: saith he, *Quanto magis considero, tanto magis obscurior mihi videtur*, the more I think on him, he is the more dark and unknown to me? This was more real knowledge, than the many subtile disputations of those men, who, by their poor shell of finite capacity and reason, presume to empty the ocean of God's infiniteness, by finding out answers to all the objections of carnal reason, against all those mysteries and riddles of the Deity. I profess, I know nothing can satisfy reason in this business, but to lead it captive to the obedience of faith, and to silence it with the faith of a mystery which we know not. Paul's answer is one for all, and better than all the syllogisms of such men, what art thou, O

man, who disputest? Dispute thou: I will believe. *Ut intelligatur, tacendum est*, silence only can get some account of God; quiet and humble ignorance in the admiration of such a majesty, is the profoundest knowledge. *Non est mirum si ignoretur, majoris esset admirationis si sciatur.* It is no wonder that God is not known,—all the wonder were to know and comprehend such a wonder, such a mystery. It is a wonder indeed, that he is not more known, but when I say so, I mean that he is not more wondered at, because he is passing knowledge. If our eyes of flesh cannot see any thing almost when they look straight and stedfastly upon the sun, O what can the eye of the soul behold, when it is fixed upon the consideration of that shining and glorious majesty? Will not that very light be as darkness to it, that it shall be as it were darkened, and dazzled with a thick mist of light, in *superlucente caligine* confounded with that resplendent darkness? It is said that the "Lord covers himself with light as with a garment," and yet clouds and darkness are about him, and he makes darkness his covering, Psal. xviii. 9, 10, 12. His inaccessible light is this glorious darkness, that strikes the eyes of men blind; as in the darkness, the sun's light is the night-owl's night and darkness. When a soul can find no better way to know him by, than by these names and notions by which we deny our own knowledge, when it has conceived all of him it can, then, as being overcome with that dazzling brightness of his glory, to think him inconceivable, and to express him in such terms as withal expresses our ignorance. There is no name agrees more to God, than that which saith, we cannot name him, we cannot know him, such as, invisible, incomprehensible, infinite, &c. This, Socrates, an heathen, professed to be all his knowledge, that he knew he did know nothing, and therefore he preached an unknown God to the Athenians, to whom, after, they erected an altar with that inscription, "To the unknown God." I confess, indeed, the most part of our discourses, of our performances, have such a writing on them, "to the

unknown God!" because we think we know him, and so we know nothing. But oh! that Christians had so much knowledge of God, so much true wisdom, as solidly, and willingly to confess in our souls our own ignorance of him, and then I would desire no other knowledge, and growing in the grace of God, but to grow more and more in the believing ignorance of such a mystery, in the knowledge of an unknown, unconceivable and unsearchable God; that in all the degrees of knowledge we might still conceive we had found less, and that there is more to be found than before we apprehended. This is the most perfect knowledge of God, that doth not drive away darkness, but increases it in the soul's apprehension. Any increase in it doth not declare what God is, or satisfy one's admiration in it, but rather shews him to be more invisible and unsearchable. So that the darkness of a soul's ignorance is more manifested by this light, and not more covered; and one's own knowledge is rather darkened, and disappears in the glorious appearance of this light. For in all new discoveries, there is no other thing appears but this, that that which the soul is seeking is supereminently unknown, and still further from knowledge than ever it conceived it to be. Therefore, whatever you conceive or see of God, if ye think ye know what ye conceive and see, it is not God ye see, but something of God's, less than God; for it is said, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what he hath laid up for them that love him." Now, certainly, that is himself he hath laid up for them; therefore, whatever thou conceivest of him, and thinkest now thou knowest of him, that is not he; for it hath not entered into man's heart to conceive him. Therefore, this must be thy soul's exercise and progress in it, to remove all things, all conceptions from him, as not beseeming his majesty, and to go still forward in such a dark negative discovery, till thou know not where to seek him, nor find him. *Si quis Deum videat et intelligat quod vidit, Deum non vidit*, if any see God, and understand what they see,

God they do not see; for, "God hath no man seen," 1 John. iv. 12; "and no man knows the Father but the Son," and none knows the Son but the Father. It is his own property to know himself, as it is to be himself. Silent and seeing ignorance is our safest and highest knowledge.

VIII.

THE ETERNITY AND UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD.

Exod. iii. 14.—I AM THAT I AM. Psal. xc. 2.—Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Job xi. 7, 8, 9.—Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? &c.

This is the chief point of saving knowledge, to know God; and this is the first point or degree of the true knowledge of God, to discern how ignorant we are of him, and to find him beyond all knowledge. The Lord gives a definition of himself, but such an one as is no more clear than himself to our capacities; a short one indeed, and you may think it says not much—I am. What is it that may not say so, I am that I am? The least and most inconsiderable creature hath its own being. Man's wisdom would have learned him to call himself by some high styles, as the manner and custom of kings and princes is, and such as the flattery of men attributes unto them. You would think the superlatives of wise, good, strong, excellent, glorious, and such like, were more beseeming his majesty; and yet there is more majesty in this simple style than in all others; but a natural man cannot behold it, for it is spiritually discerned. Let the potsherds of the earth, (saith he) strive with the potsherds of the earth, Isa. xlv. 9, but let them not strive with their Maker. So I say, let creatures compare with creatures; let them take

superlative styles, in regard of others. Let some of them be called good, and some better, in the comparison among themselves; but God must not enter in the comparison. Paul thinks it an odious comparison, to compare present crosses to eternal glory; "I think them not worthy to be compared," saith Paul, Rom. viii. But how much more odious is it, to compare God with creatures? Call him highest, call him most powerful, call him most excellent, almighty, most glorious in respect of creatures, you do but abase his majesty, to bring it down to any terms of comparison with them, which is beyond all the bounds of understanding. All these do but express him to be in some degree eminently seated above the creatures, as some creatures are above all others. So you do no more but make him the head of all, as some one creature is the head of one line or kind under it; but what is that to his majesty? He speaks otherwise of himself, Isa. xl. 17. "All nations are before him as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing." Then, certainly, you have not taken up the true notion of God, when you have conceived him the most eminent of all beings, as long as any being appears as a being in his sight, before whom all beings conjoined are as nothing. While you conceive God to be the best, you still attribute something to the creature; for all comparatives include the positive in both extremes. So then, you take up only some different degrees between them who differ so infinitely, so incomprehensibly. The distance betwixt heaven and earth is but a poor similitude, to express the distance between God and creatures. What is the distance betwixt a being and nothing? Can you measure it? Can you imagine it? Suppose you take the most high, and the most low, and measure the distance betwixt them, you do but consider the difference betwixt two beings, but you do not express how far nothing is distant from any of them. Now, if any thing could be imagined less than nothing, could you at all guess at the vast distance between it and a being? Now, so it is here. Thus saith the Lord, all nations,

their glory, perfection, and number, all of them, and all their excellencies united, do not amount to the value of an unit, in regard of my Majesty; all of them like ciphers, join never so many of them together, they can never make up a number, they are nothing in this regard, and less than nothing. So then, we ought thus to conceive of God, and thus to attribute a being and life to him, as in his sight and in the consideration of it, all created beings might evanish out of our sight; even as the glorious light of the sun, though it do not annihilate the stars, and make them nothing, yet it annihilates their appearance to our senses, and makes them disappear, as if they were not. Although there be a great difference and inequality of the stars in the night, some lighter, some darker, some of the first magnitude, and some of the second and third, &c. some of greater glory, and some of less; but in the day-time all are alike, all are darkened by the sun's glory. Even so it is here, though we may compare one creature with another, and find different degrees of perfection and excellency, while we are only comparing them among themselves; but let once the glorious brightness of God shine upon the soul, and in that light all these lights shall be obscured, all their differences unobserved. An angel and a man, a man and a worm, differ much in glory and perfection of being; but oh! in his presence there is no such reckoning. Upon this account all things are alike, God infinitely distant from all, and so not more or less. Infiniteness is not capable of such terms of comparison. This is the reason why Christ says, "there is none good but one, even God." Why, because in respect of his goodness, nothing deserves that name. Lesser light in the view of the greater is a darkness, as less good in comparison of a greater, appears evil; how much more then shall created light and created goodness lose that name and notion, in the presence of that uncreated light, and self-sufficient goodness. And therefore it is, that the Lord calls himself after this manner, "I am," as if nothing else were. I will not say,

saith he, that I am the highest, the best and most glorious that is. That supposeth other things to have some being, and some glory that is worthy the accounting of: but I am, and there is none else; I am alone; I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear I live for ever. There is nothing else can say, I am, I live, and there is none else; for there is nothing hath it of itself. Can any boast of that which they have borrowed, and is not their own? As, if the bird that had stolen from other birds its fair feathers, should come forth and contend with them about beauty; would not they presently every one pluck out their own, and leave her naked, to be an object of mockery to all? Even so, since our breath and being is in our nostrils, and that depends upon his Majesty's breathing upon us, if he should but keep in his breath, as it were, we should vanish into nothing; he "looketh upon man and he is not," Job vii. 8. That is a strange look, that looks man not only out of countenance, but out of life and being. He looks him into his first nothing; and then can he say, I live, I am? No, he must always say of himself in respect of God, as Paul of himself in respect of Christ, "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me." I am, yet not I, but God in me. I live, I am, yet not I, but in God, in whom I live and have my being. So that there is no other thing beside God can say, "I am;" because all things are but borrowed drops of this self-sufficient fountain, and sparkles of this primitive light. Let any thing intervene between the stream and the fountain, and it is cut off and dried up; let any thing be interposed between the sun and the beam, and it evanishes. Therefore, this fountain-being, this original light, this self-being, *αὐτο ὀν*, as Plato called him, deserves only the name of being; other things that we call after that name are nearer nothing than God, and so, in regard of his majesty, may more fitly be called nothing than something. You see then how profound a mystery of God's absolute self-sufficient perfection, is infolded in these three letters, I am, or in these four (JEHOVAH.) If you ask what is

God? There is nothing occurs better than this, "I am," or he that is. If I should say he is the almighty, the only wise, the most perfect, the most glorious, it is all contained in that word, "I am that I am," *nempe hoc est ei esse, hæc omnia esse;* for that is to be, indeed, to be all those perfections simply, absolutely, and, as it were, solely. If I say all that, and should reckon out all the Scripture-epithets, I add nothing; if I say no more, I diminish nothing.

As this holds out God's absolute perfection, so we told you that it imports his eternity and unchangeableness. You know Pilate's speech, "what I have written I have written," wherein he meant that he would not change it; it should stand so. So this properly belongs to God's eternity, "before the mountains were brought forth, from everlasting to everlasting he is God," Psal. xc. 2. Now this is properly to be, and this only deserves the name of being, which never was nothing, and never shall be nothing, which may always say, I am. You know it is so with nothing else but God. The heavens and earth, with the things therein, could not say, six thousand years ago, I am. Adam could once have said, I am, but now he cannot say it; for that self-being and fountain-being hath said to him, return to dust. And so it is with all the generations past; where are they now? They were, but they are not. And we then were not, and now are; for we are come in their place, but within a little time, who of us can say, I am? No, "we flee away and are like a dream, as when one awaketh:" we "are like a tale that is told," that makes a present noise, and it is past; within few years this generation will pass, and none will make mention of us; our place will not know us, no more than we do now remember those who have been before. Christ said of John, he was a burning and shining light; he was, saith he, but now he is not. But Christ may always say, "I am the light and life of men." Man is, but look a little backward, and he was not; you shall find his original. And step a little forward and he shall not be,

you shall find his end. But God is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." But oh! who can retire so far backward as to apprehend a beginning, or go such a start forward as to conceive an end in such a being as is the beginning and end of all things, but without all beginning and end? Whose understanding would it not confound? There is no way here but to flee into Paul's sanctuary, "O the height and breadth, and length and depth!" We cannot imagine a being, but we must first conceive it nothing, and in some instant receiving its being; and, therefore, canst thou by searching find out God? Therefore what his being is, hath not entered into the heart of man to consider. If any man would live out the space but of two generations, he would be a world's wonder; but if any had their days prolonged as the patriarchs before the flood, they would be called ancient indeed, but then the heavens and earth are far more ancient. We may go backward the space of near six thousand years in our own minds, and yet be as far from his beginning as we were. When we are come to the beginning of all things, a man's imagination may yet extend itself further, and suppose to itself as many thousands of years before the beginning of time, as all the angels and men of all nations, and generations from the beginning, if they had been employed in no other thing but this, could have summed up; and then suppose a product to be made of all the several sums of years, it would be vast and unspeakable; but yet your imagination could reach further, and multiply that great sum into itself as often as there are units in it. Now when you have done all this, you are never a whit nearer the days of "the Ancient of days." Suppose then this should be the only exercise of men and angels throughout all eternity; all this marvellous arithmetic would not amount unto the least shadow of the continuance of him who is "from everlasting." All that huge product of all the multiplications of men and angels, hath no proportion unto that never-beginning, and never-ending duration. The greatest sum that is imaginable

hath a certain proportion to the least number, that it containeth it so oft and no oftener; so that the least number being multiplied will amount unto the greatest that you can conceive. But O! where shall a soul find itself here? It is inclosed between infiniteness before and infiniteness behind, between two everlastings; which way soever it turns, there is no outgoing; which way soever it looks, it must lose itself in an infiniteness round about it. It can find no beginning and no end, when it hath wearied itself in searching, which, if it find not, it knows not what it is, and cannot tell what it is. Now what are we then? O what are we, who so magnify ourselves? "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing," Job viii. 9. Suppose that we had endured the space of a thousand years, yet saith Moses, Psal. xc. 4, "A thousand years are but as yesterday in thy sight." Time hath no succession to thee. Thou beholdest at once what is not at once, but in several times, all that may thus happen hath not the proportion of one day to thy days. We change in our days, and are not that to-day we were yesterday; but "he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. Every day we are dying, some part of our life is taken away; we leave still one day more behind us, and what is behind us is gone and cannot be recovered. Though we vainly please ourselves in the number of our years, and the extent of our life, and the vicissitudes of time, yet the truth is, we are but still losing so much of our being and time, as passeth. First, we lose our childhood, then we lose our manhood, and then we leave our old age behind us also, and there is no more before us. Even the very present day we divide it with death. But when he moves all things, he remains immoveable. Though days and years be in a continual flux and motion about him, and they carry us down with their force, yet he abides the same for ever. Even the earth that is established so sure, and the heavens that are supposed to be incorruptible, yet they wax old as doth a garment; but he is the same, and his years have no end, Psal. cii. 26, 27. *Sine principio principium, absque fine finis, cui*

præteritum non abit, haud adit futurum, ante omnia, post omnia, totus, unus ipse. He is the beginning without any beginning, the end without an end, there is nothing by-past to him, and nothing to come, *sed uno mentis cernit in ictu, quæ sunt, quæ erunt, quæ fuerantque,* he is one that is all, before all, after all, and in all. He beholds out of the exalted and super-eminent tower of eternity, all the successions and changes of the creatures, and there is no succession, no mutation in his knowledge, as in ours. Known to him are all his works, from the beginning. He can declare the end before the beginning; for he knows the end of all things, before he gives them beginning. Therefore he is never driven to any consultation upon any emergence, or incident, as the wisest of men are, who could not foresee all accidents and events; but he is in one mind, saith Job, and that one mind and one purpose is one for all, one concerning all. He had it from everlasting, and who can turn him? For he will accomplish what his soul desires.

Now, "canst thou by searching find out God?" Canst thou, a poor mortal creature, either ascend up unto the height of heaven, or descend down into the depths of hell? Canst thou travel abroad, and compass all the sea and dry land, by its longitude and latitude? Would any mortal creature undertake such a voyage, to compass the universe? Nay, not only so, but to search into every corner of it, above and below, on the right hand, and on the left? No certainly, unless we suppose a man whose head reaches unto the height of heaven, and whose feet is down in the depths of hell, and whose arms, stretched out, can fathom the length of the earth, and breadth of the sea; unless, I say, we suppose such a creature, then it is in vain to imagine, that either the height of the one, or the depth of the other, the length of the one, and the breadth of the other, can be found out and measured. Now, if mortal creatures cannot attain the measure of that which is finite, O! then, what can a creature do, what can a creature know of him that is infinite, and the ma-

ker of all these things? You cannot compass the sea and land, how then can a soul comprehend him, "who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and the mountains he weighs in scales, and the hills in a balance?" Isa. xl. 12. Thou canst not measure the circumference of the heaven, how then canst thou find out him, "who meteth out the heavens with his span, and stretcheth them out as a curtain?" Isa. xl. 12, 22. You cannot number the nations, or perceive the magnitude of the earth, and the huge extent of the heavens, what then canst thou know of him, "who sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants are but as grasshoppers before him?" and he spreadeth out the heavens as a tent to dwell in! He made all the pins and stakes of this tabernacle, and he fastened them below, but upon nothing, and stretches this curtain about them, and above them; and it was not so much difficulty to him, as to you to draw the curtain about your bed, for "he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast." Canst thou by searching find him out? And yet thou must search him, not so much out of curiosity to know what he is, for "he dwells in inaccessible light, which no man hath seen, and no man can see," 1 Tim. vi. 16. Not so much to find him, as to be found of him, or to find what we cannot know when we have found. *Hic est qui nunquam quæri frustra potest, cum tamen inveniri non potest.* You may seek him, but though you never find him, yet ye shall not seek him in vain, for ye shall find blessedness in him. Though you find him, yet can you search him out unto perfection? then what you have found were not God. How is it possible for such narrow hearts to frame an apprehension, or receive an impression of such an immense greatness, and eternal goodness? Will not a soul lose its power of thinking, and speaking, because there is so much to be thought and spoken; and it so transcends all that it can think or speak? Silence then must be the best rhetoric; and the sweetest eloquence, when eloquence itself must

become dumb and silent. It is the abundance and excess of that inaccessible light, that hath no proportion to our understandings, that strikes us as blind as in the darkness the want of light. All that we can say of God is, that whatsoever we can think or conceive, he is not that, because he hath not "entered into the heart of man to conceive," and that he is not like any of those things which we know, unto which if he be not like, we cannot frame any similitude or likeness of him in our knowledge. What shall we then do? Seek him and search him indeed; but, if we cannot know him, to reverence and fear, and adore what we know. So much of him may be known, as may teach us our duty, and shew unto us our blessedness. Let then all our enquiries of him have special relation to this end, that we may out of love and fear of such a glorious and good God, worship and serve him, and compose ourselves according to his will, and wholly to his pleasure. Whatever thou knowest of God, or searchest of him, it is but a vain speculation, and a work of curiosity, if it do not lead to this end,—to frame and fashion thy soul to an union and communion with him in love; if it do not discover thyself unto thyself, that in that light of God's glorious majesty thou mayest distinctly behold thy own vileness, and wretched misery, thy darkness, and deadness, and utter impotency. The angels that Isaiah saw attending God in the temple, had wings covering their faces, and wings covering their feet. Those excellent spirits who must cover their feet from us, because we cannot behold their glory, as Moses behoved to be vailed, yet they cannot behold his glory, but must cover their face from the radiant and shining brightness of his majesty, yet they have other two wings to fly with. And being thus composed in reverence and fear to God, they are ready to execute his commands willingly and swiftly, Isa. vi. 1, 2, 3, &c. But what is the use Isaiah makes of all this glorious sight? "Wo is me, I am a man of polluted lips," &c. Oh! all is unclean, people, and pastor. He had known, doubtless, something of it before, but now he sees it of

new, as if he had never seen it. The glory of God shining on him doth not puff him up in arrogancy and conceit of the knowledge of such profound mysteries, but he is more abased in himself by it. It shines into his heart and whole man, and lets him see all unclean within and without. And so it was with Job, Job xlii. 5, 6. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," but as long as it was hearsay, I thought myself something. I often reflected upon myself and actions, with a kind of self-complacency and delight; but now, saith he, since "I have seen thee by the seeing of the eye, I abhor myself in dust and ashes." I cannot look upon myself with patience, without abhorrency and detestation. Self-love made me loathe other men's sins more than mine own, and self-love did cover mine own sins from me; it presented me to myself in a feigned likeness; but now I see myself in my true shape, and all coverings stripped off. Thy light hath pierced into my soul, and behold, I cannot endure to look upon myself. Here now is the true knowledge of God's majesty, which discovers within thee a mystery of iniquity; and here is the knowledge of God indeed, which abases all things beside God, not only in opinion but in affection, that attracts and unites thy soul to God, and draws it from thyself and all created things. This is a right discovery of divine purity and glory, that spots even the cleanness of angels, and stains the pride of all glory; much more will it represent filthiness, as filthiness, without a covering. It is knowledge and science, falsely so called, that puffeth up, for true knowledge emptieth a soul of itself, and humbleth a soul in itself, that it may be full of God. He that thinks he knows any thing, he knows nothing as he ought to know.

This then is the first property or mark of the saving knowledge of God. It removes all grounds of vain confidence, that a soul cannot trust unto itself. And then the very proper intent of it is, that a soul may trust in God, and depend on him in all things. For this purpose the Lord hath called himself by so many names in Scripture, answerable to our several necessities and difficulties,

that he might make known to us how all-sufficient he is, that so we may turn our eyes and hearts towards him. This was the intent of this name, I AM, that Moses might have a support of his faith; for if he had looked to outward appearance, was it not almost a ridiculous thing, and like a vain fancy, for a poor inconsiderable man to go to a king with such a message, that he would dismiss so many subjects? And was it not an attempt of some mad-man to go about to lead so many thousands from a wicked tyrannical king, into another nation? Well, saith the Lord, I am; I, who give all things a being, will give a being to my promise. I will make Pharaoh hearken, and the people obey. Well then, what is it that this name of God will not answer? It is a creating name, a name that can bring all things out of nothing by a word. If he be such as he is, then he can make of us what he pleases. If our souls had this name constantly engraven on our hearts, O what power would divine promises and threatenings have with us! I, even I, am he that comforteth thee, saith he. If we believed that it were he indeed, the Lord Jehovah, how would we be comforted! How would we praise him by his name JAH! How would we stoop unto him, and submit unto his blessed will! If we believed this, would we not be as dependent on him as if we had no being in ourselves? Would we not make him our habitation and dwelling-place? And conclude our own stability, and the stability of his church from his unvariable eternity, as the Psalmist, Psal. xcix. 1. Psal. cii. ult. How can we think of such a fountain-Being, but we must withal acknowledge ourselves to be shadows of his goodness, and that we owe to him what we are, and so consecrate and dedicate ourselves to his glory! How can we consider such a self-being, independent, and creating goodness, but we must have some desire to cleave to him, and some confidence to trust in him! Now, this is to know him. When we think on his unchangeableness, let us consider our own vanity, whose glory and perfection is like a summer flower, or like a vapour ascending for a

little time, whose best estate is altogether vanity. Our purposes are soon broken off, and made of none effect; our resolutions change. This is a character of mortality, we are not always alike, *non sibi constare, nec ubique et semper sibi parem eundemque esse.* To be now one thing, and then another thing, is a property of sinful and wretched man. Therefore let us "cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils," and not trust in princes who shall die, far less in ourselves, who are less than the least of men: but let us put our trust in God, who changes not, and we shall not be consumed; our waters shall not fail, we shall never be ashamed of any hope we have in him. There is nothing else you trust in, but undoubtedly it shall prove your shame and confusion. Whatever you hear or know of God, know that it is vain and empty, unless it descend down into the heart to fashion it to his fear and love, and extend unto the outward man to conform it to obedience; "you are but vain in your imaginations, and your foolish hearts are darkened," while "when you know God, you glorify him not as God." If that be not the fruit and end of knowledge, that knowledge shall be worse to thee than ignorance, for it both brings on judicial hardening here, and will be thy solemn accuser and witness against thee hereafter, Rom. i. 21, 24. The knowledge of Jesus Christ, truly so called, is neither barren nor unfruitful, for out of its root and sap springs out humility, self-abasing confidence in God, patience in tribulations, meekness in provocations, temperance and sobriety in lawful things, &c. 2 Pet. i. 5–8.

IX.

GOD IS MERCIFUL.

Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.—The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands.

THERE is nothing can separate between God and a people but iniquity, and yet he is very loath to separate even for

that. He makes many shows of departing, that so we may hold him fast; and indeed he is not difficult to be holden. He threatens often to remove his presence from a person or nation; and he threatens, that he may not indeed remove, but that they may entreat him to stay, and he is not hard to be entreated. Who is a God like unto him, slow to anger, and of great mercy? He is long of being provoked, and not long provoked; for it is like the anger of a parent's love. Love takes on anger, as the last remedy, and if it prevail, it is as glad to put it off, as it was unwilling to take it on. You may see a lively picture of this in God's dealing with Moses and this people in the preceding chapter. He had long endured this rebellious and obstinate people, had often threatened to cut them off, and yet, as it were, loath to do it, and repenting of it, he suffers himself to be entreated for them; but all in vain to them,—they corrupted their way still more: and in the 32d chapter fall into gross idolatry, the great trespass that he had given them so solemn warning of often, whereupon great wrath is conceived. And the Lord, chap. xxxiii. 2. threatens to depart from them,—Go your way, saith he, to Canaan, but I will not go with you; take your venture of any judgments, and the people of the land's cruelty. Here is a sad farewel to Israel; and who would think he could be detained after all that? Who would think that he could be entreated? And yet he is not entreated, he is not requested before he gives some ground of it, and before he first condescends; go, saith he, and put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. Will he then accept a repenting people, and is there yet hope of mercy? Should he that is going away shew us the way to keep him still? And he that flees from us, will he strengthen us to pursue and follow after him? This is not after the manner of men, it is true, whose compassions fail when their passion ariseth, but this is the manner and method of grace: or of him who waits to be gracious. He flees so as he would have a follower! Yea, while he seems to go away, he draws the soul that he might run af-

ter him. Hence is that word, Psal. lxiii. 8. "My soul follows hard after thee; thy right hand upholds me." Well, the people mourn and put off their ornaments in sign of humiliation and abasement, but all this doth not pacify and quench the flame that was kindled. Moses takes the tabernacle out of the camp, the place of judgment where God spake with the people; and the cloud, the sign of God's presence, removes. In a word, the signs of God's loving and kind presence depart from them, to signify that they were divorced from God, and in a manner, the Lord by Moses excommunicates all the people, and rulers both, and draws away these holy things from the contagion of a profane people. But yet all is not gone. He goes far off, but not out of sight, that you may always follow him, and if you follow, he will stand still. He is never without the reach of crying, though we do not perceive him. Now, in this sad case you may have a trial who is godly. Every one that seeks the Lord will separate from the unholy congregation, and follow the tabernacle; and this affects the whole people much, that they all worship in the tent doors. Now, in the meantime God admits Moses to speak with him. Though he will not speak to the people, yet he will speak with their mediator, a typical mediator, to shew us that God is well pleased in Christ; and so all Christ's intercessions and requests for us will get a hearing. When they are come once in talking, the business is taken up, for He is not soon angry, and never implacably angry,—"slow to anger," and keeps it not long. Moses falling familiar with God, not only obtains his request for the people, but becomes more bold in a request for his own satisfaction and confirmation. He could not endure to lead that people, except God went with him; and having the promise of his going with them, he cannot endure distance with him, but aspires to the nearest communion that may be. Oh! that it were so with us. His great request is, that the Lord will shew him his glory; had he not seen much of this already? and more than any man ever saw, when he spake in the mount with God, &c.

Nay, but he would see more, for there is always more to be seen, and there is in a godly soul always more desire to see it. The more is seen, the more is loved and desired. Tasting of it only begets a kindly appetite after it, and the more tasted, still the fresher and more recent, but yet it is above both desire and fruition,—"Thou canst not see my face," &c. All our knowledge of God, all our attainments of experience of him, do reach but to some dark and confused apprehension of what he is. The clearest and nearest sight of God in this world, is, as if a man were not known but by his back, which is a great point of estrangement. It is said, in heaven we shall see him face to face, and fully as he is, because then the soul is made capable of it.

Two things in us here put us in an incapacity of nearness with God, infirmity and iniquity. Infirmity in us cannot behold his glory: It is of so weak eyes, that the brightness of the sun would strike it blind. And iniquity in us, he cannot behold it, because he is of pure eyes, that can look on no unclean thing. It is the only thing in the creation that God's holiness hath antipathy at, and therefore he is still about the destroying of the body of sin in us, about the purging from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; and till the soul be thus purged of all sin, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, it cannot be a temple for an immediate vision of him, and an immediate exhibition of God to us. Sin is the wall of partition, and the thick cloud that eclipses his glory from us. It is the opposite hemisphere of darkness, contrary to light; according to the access or recess of God's presence, it is more or less dark. The more sin reigns in thee, the less of God is in thee; and the more sin be subdued, the readier and nearer is God's presence. But let us comfort ourselves, that one day we shall put off both infirmity and iniquity; mortality shall put on immortality, and corruption be clothed with incorruption. We shall leave the rags of mortal weakness in the grave, and our menstruous cloths of sin behind us, and then shall the weak eyes of flesh be made

like eagles' eyes, to behold the sun ; and then shall the soul be clothed with holiness, as with a garment, which God shall delight to look upon, because he sees his own image in that glass.

We come to the Lord's satisfying of Moses' desire, and proclaiming his name before him. It is himself only can tell you what he is. It is not ministers' preaching, or other discourse, can proclaim that name to you. We may indeed speak over those words unto you, but it is the Lord that must write that name upon your heart. He only can discover his glory to your spirit. There is a spirit of life which cannot be enclosed in letters and syllables, or transmitted through your ears into your hearts, but he himself must create it inwardly, and stir up the inward sense and feeling of that name, of those attributes. Faith, indeed, comes by hearing, and our knowledge in this life is through a glass darkly, through ordinances and senses ; but there must be an inward teaching and speaking to your souls to make that effectual, —"the anointing teacheth you all things," 1 John ii. 27. Alas ! it is the separation of that from the word that makes it so unprofitable. If the Spirit of God were inwardly writing what the word is teaching, then should your souls be living epistles, that ye might read God's name on them. O ! be much in imploring of, and depending on him that teacheth to profit, who only can declare unto your souls what he is !

These names express his essence or being, and his properties, what he is in himself, and what he is to us. In himself he is Jehovah, or a self-being ἀυτ ὤν, as we heard in the 3d chapter, "I am that I am," and EL, a strong God, or Almighty God ; which two hold out unto us the absolute incomprehensible perfection of God, eminently and infinitely enclosing within himself all the perfections of the creature ; the unchangeable and immutable being of God, who was, and is, and is to come, without succession, without variation, or shadow of turning ; and then the almighty power of God, by which without difficulty, by

the inclination and beck of his will and pleasure, he can make, or unmake all, create or annihilate, to whom nothing is impossible. Which three, if they were pondered by us, till our souls received the stamp of them, they would certainly be powerful to abstract and draw our hearts from the vain, changeable, and empty shadow of the creature, and gather our scattered affections that are parted among them, because of their insufficiency, that all might unite in one, and join with this self-sufficient and eternal God. I say, if a soul did indeed believe and consider, how all-sufficient he is, how insufficient all things else are, would it not cleave to him, and draw near to him, Psal. lxxiii. ult. It is the very torment and vexation of the soul to be thus racked, distracted, and divided about many things; and therefore many, because there is none of them can supply all our wants. Our wants are infinite, our desires insatiable, and the good that is in any thing is limited and bounded,—it can serve, one but for one use, and another for another use, and when all are together, they can but supply some wants, but they leave much of the soul empty. But often these outward things cross one another, and cannot consist together; and hence ariseth much strife and debate in a soul. His need requireth both, and both will not agree. But O that you could see this one universal good, one for all, and above all, your souls would choose him certainly—your souls would trust in him! Ye would say, "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride on horses." Creatures shall not satisfy us, we will seek our happiness in thee and no where else; since we have tasted this new wine, away with the old, the new is better. I beseech you, make God your friend, for he is a great one; whether he be a friend or an enemy, he hath two properties that make him either most comfortable, or most terrible, according as he is at peace or war with souls,—eternity, and omnipotency. You were all once enemies to him. O consider what a party you have, an almighty party, and an unchangeable party! and if you will make peace with him, and that in Christ,

then know he is the best friend in the world, because he is unchangeable and almighty. If he be thy friend, he will do all for thee he can do, and thou hast need of. But many friends willing to do, have not ability, but he hath power to do what he wills and pleases. Many friends are changeable, their affections dry up, and of themselves die; and therefore even princes' friendship is but a vain confidence, for they shall die, and then their thoughts of favour perish with them, but he abides the same for all generations. There is no end of his duration, and no end of his affection; he can still say, "I am that I am." What I was, I am, and I will be what I am. Men cannot say so, they are like the brooks that the companies of Teman looked after, and thought to have found them in summer as they left them in winter; but behold they were dried up, and the companies ashamed. God cannot make thee ashamed of thy hope, because he is faithful and able. Ability and fidelity is a sure anchor to hold by in all storms and tempests.

Such is God in himself. Now, there are two manner of ways he vents himself towards the creatures, in a comfortable way, or in a terrible way. This glorious perfection and almighty power, hath an issue upon sinners, and it runs in a twofold channel, of mercy or justice; of mercy towards miserable sinners that find themselves lost, and flee unto him and take hold of his strength; and justice towards all those that flatter themselves in their own eyes, and continue in their sins, and put the evil day far off. There is no mercy for such as fear not justice, and there is no justice for such as flee from it unto mercy. The Lord exhibits himself in a twofold appearance, according to the condition of sinners. He sits on a throne and tribunal of grace and mercy, to make access to the vilest sinner, who is afraid of his wrath, and would fain be at peace with him; and he sits on a throne of justice and wrath, to seclude and debar presumptuous sinners from holiness. There were two mountains under the law, one of cursings, and another of blessings. These are the

mountains God sets his throne upon, and from these he speaks and sentences mankind. From the mountain of cursings, he hath pronounced a curse, and condemnatory sentence upon all flesh, "for all have sinned." Therefore, he concludes all under sin, that all flesh might stop their mouth, and the whole world become guilty before God. Now, the Lord having thus condemned all mankind because of disobedience, he sits again upon the mountain of blessings, and pronounces a sentence of absolution, of as many as have taken with the sentence of condemnation, and appealed to his grace and mercy; and those which do not so, the sentence of condemnation stands above their heads unrepealed. He erects his tribunal of justice in the world for this end, that all flesh might once be convicted before him, and therefore he cites, as it were, and summons all men to sist themselves and compear before his tribunal, to be judged. He lays out an accusation in the word against them. He takes their consciences witness of the truth of all that is charged on them, and then pronounces that sentence in their conscience, "cursed is he that abides not in all things," which the conscience subsumes, and concludes itself accursed, and subscribes to the equity of the sentence. And thus man is guilty before God, and his mouth stopped. He hath no excuses, no pretences, he can see no way to escape from justice, and God is justified, by this means, in his speaking and judging, Psal. li. 4. The soul ratifies and confirms the truth and justice of all his threatenings and judgments, Rom. iii. 4. Now, for such souls as join with God in judging and condemning themselves, the Lord hath erected a throne of grace, and tribunal of mercy in the word, whereupon he hath set his Son Jesus Christ, Psal. ii. 6; lxxxix. 14; xlv. 6. Heb. i. 8. And O! this throne is a comfortable throne. Mercy and truth goes before the face of the king to welcome and entertain miserable sinners, and to make aceess to them. And from this throne Jesus Christ holds out the sceptre of the gospel, to invite sinners, self-condemned sinners, to come to him alone, who hath gotten all

final judgment committed to him, that "he may give eternal life to whom he will," John v. 21, 22. O! that is a sweet and ample commission given to our friend and brother Jesus Christ,—power to repeal sentences passed against us, power and authority to absolve them whom justice hath condemned, and to bless whom the law hath cursed, and to open their mouth to praise whose mouth sin and guiltiness hath stopped; power to give the answer of a good conscience to thy evil self-tormenting conscience. In a word, he hath power to give life, to make alive and heal those who are killed or wounded by the commandment. Now, I say, seeing God hath of purpose established this throne of mercy in the word, thou mayest well, after receiving and acknowledging of the justice of the curse of the law, appeal to divine mercy and grace, sitting on another throne of the gospel. Thou mayest, if thy conscience urge thee to despair, and to conclude there is no hope, thou mayest, I say, appeal from thy conscience, from Satan, from justice, unto Jesus Christ, who is holding out the sceptre to thee. The minister calls thee, rise and come, stand no longer before that bar, for it is a subordinate judicatory, there is a way to redress thee by a higher court of grace. Thou mayest say to justice, to Satan, to thy own conscience,—It is true, I confess, that I deserve that sentence; I am guilty, and can say nothing against it, while I stand alone. But though I cannot satisfy, and have not; yet there is one, Jesus Christ, who gave his life a ransom for many, and whom God hath given as a propitiation for sins. He hath satisfied and paid the debt in my name; go and apprehend the cautioner, since he hath undertaken it, nay, he hath done it, and is absolved. Thou hadst him in thy hands, O justice! Thou hadst him prisoner under the power of death. Since thou hast let him go, then he is acquitted from all the charge of my sins; and therefore, since I know that he is now a king, and hath a throne to judge the world and plead the cause of the poor sheep, I will appeal to him, refer the cause to his decision, I will make my supplications to him, and

certainly he will hear, and interpose himself between wrath and me. He will rescind this sentence of condemnation, since he himself was condemned for us, and is justified,—"It is Christ that died, yea rather is risen again," who shall condemn me? He is near that justifies me, Rom. viii. 33, 34. Now if thou do indeed flee unto him for refuge, that city is open for thee, and nothing to prejudge thy entry. But no curse, no condemnation can enter in it, Rom. viii. 1. He will justify and absolve thee from all things whereof the law could not justify thee, but condemn thee. "There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared." David may teach thee this manner of application, Psal. cxxx. and cxlii. 2, of appealing from the deserved curse, to free undeserved blessing and mercy in Christ.

Let us consider this name of the Lord, and it shall answer all our suspicions of him; all our objections against coming to him and believing in him. It is certain, ignorance is the mother of unbelief, together with the natural perverseness of our hearts. If we knew his name, we would trust in him; if his names were pondered and considered, we would believe in him. Satan knows this, and therefore his great sleight and cunning is, to hold our minds fixed on the consideration of our misery and desperate estate. He keeps the awakened conscience still upon that comfortless sight, and he labours to represent God by halves, and that is a false representation of God. He represents him as clothed with justice and vengeance, as a consuming fire, in which light a soul can see nothing but desperation written; and he labours to hold out the thoughts of his mercy and grace, or diverts a soul from the consideration of his promises;—whence it comes, that they are not established, that though salvation be near, yet it is far from them in their sense and apprehension. Therefore I say, you should labour to get an entire sight of God, and you shall see him best in his word. There he reveals himself, and there you find, if you consider, that which may make you fear him indeed, but never flee from him,—that which may abase you, but withal embol-

den you to come to him though trembling. Whatever thought possess thee of thine own misery, of thy own guiltiness, labour to counterpoise that with a thought of his mercy and free promises. Whatever be suggested of his holiness and justice, hear himself speak out his own name, and thou shalt hear as much of mercy and grace, as may make these not terrible unto thee, though high and honourable. The Lord hath so framed the expression and proclamation of his name in this place, that first a word of majesty and power is premised, "the Lord, the Lord God," that it may compose our hearts in fear and reverence of such a glorious one, and make a preparatory impression of the majesty of our God, which indeed is the foundation of all true faith. It begins to adore and admire a deity, a majesty hid from the world. The thoughts of his power and glory possess the soul first, and make it begin to tremble to think that it hath such a high and holy one to deal with.

But, in the next place, you have the most sweet, alluring, comforting styles that can be imagined, to meet with the trembling and languishing condition of a soul that would be ready to faint before such a majesty. Here mercy takes it by the hand, and gives a cordial of grace, pardon, forgiveness, &c. to it, which revives the soul of the humble, and intermingles some rejoicing with former trembling. Majesty and greatness go before to abase and humble the soul in its own eyes, and mercy and goodness second them, to lift up those who are low, and exalt the humble; and in the description of this, the Lord spends more words, according to the necessity of a soul, to signify to us how great and strong consolation may be grounded on his name, how accessible he is, though he dwell in inaccessible light, how lovely he is, though he be the high and the lofty one, how good he is, though he be great, how merciful he is, though he be majestic. In a word, that those that flee to him may have all invitation, all encouragement to come, and nothing to discourage, to prejudge their welcome, that whoever will, may come, and

nothing may hinder on his part. And then after all this, he subjoins a word of his justice, in avenging sin, to shew us that he leaves that as the last, that he essays all gaining ways of mercy with us, that he is not very much delighted with the death of sinners, that whosoever perishes may blame themselves, for hating their own salvation, and forsaking their own mercy.

Now whoever thou art that apprehendest a dreadful and terrible God, and thyself a miserable and wretched sinner, thou canst find no comfort in God's highness and power, but it looks terrible upon thee, because thou doubtest of his good-will to save and pardon thee. Thou sayest with the blind man, "if thou wilt thou canst do it;" thou art a strong God, but what comfort can I have in thy strength, since I know not thy good-will? I say, the Lord answers thee in this name, I am merciful, saith the Lord. If thou be miserable, I am merciful as well as strong; if thou have sin and misery, I have compassion and pity. My mercy may be a copy and pattern to all men to learn it of me, even towards their own brethren, Luke vi. 36. Therefore he is called "the father of mercies," 2 Cor. i. 3. *Misericors est cui alterius miseria cordi est.* Mercy hath its very name from misery, for it is no other thing than to lay another's misery to heart; not to despise it, not to add to it, but to help it. It is a strong inclination to succour the misery of sinners, therefore thou needest no other thing to commend thee to him. Art thou miserable, and knowest it indeed? Then he is merciful; and know that also, these two suit well.

Nay, but saith the convinced soul, I know not if he will be merciful to me, for what am I? There is nothing in me to be regarded, I have nothing to conciliate favour, and all that may procure hatred. But, saith the Lord, I am gracious, and dispense mercy freely, without respect to condition or qualification. Say not, if I had such a measure of humiliation as such an one, if I loved him so much, if I had so much godly sorrow and repentance, then, I think he would be merciful to me. Say not so, for

behold he is gracious. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and there is no other cause, no motive to procure it; it comes from within his own breast.. It is not thy repentance will make him love thee, nor thy hardness of heart will make him hate thee, or obstruct the vent of his grace towards thee. No, if it be grace, it is no more of works,—not works in that way that thou imaginest. It is not of repentance, not of faith, in that sense thou conceivest, but it is freely, without the hire, without the price of repentance or faith, because all those are but the free gifts of grace. Thou wouldst have these graces to procure his favour, and to make them the ground of thy believing in his promises; but grace is without money. It immediately contracts with discovered misery, so that if thou do discover in thyself misery and sin, though thou find nothing else, yet do not cast away confidence, but so much the more address thyself to mercy and grace, which do not seek repentance in thee, but bring repentance and faith with them unto thee. Yet there is something in the awakened conscience. I have gone on long in sin, I have been a presumptuous sinner; can he endure me longer? Well, hear what the Lord saith, I am long-suffering and patient; and if he had not been so, we had been damned ere now. Patience hath a long term, and we cannot outrun it, outweary it. Why do we not wonder that he presently and instantly executed his wrath on angels, and gave them not one hour's space for repentance, but cast them down headlong into destruction, as in a moment; and yet his majesty hath so long delayed the execution of our sentence, and calls unto repentance and forgiveness, that we may escape the condemnation of angels. His patience is not slackness and negligence, as men count it, 2 Pet. iii. 9. He sits not in heaven as an idol, and idle spectator of what men are doing; but he observes all wrongs, and is sensible of them also. And if we were mindful and sensible of them also, he would forget them. He is long-suffering. This is extended and stretched-out patience beyond all expectation, beyond al

deserving, yea, contrary to it. Therefore, as long as he forbears, if thou apprehend thy misery and sin, and continuance in it; do not conclude that it is desperate; "Why should a living man complain?" As long as patience lengthens the life, if thou desire to come to him, believe he will accept thee.

But, saith the doubting soul, I am exceeding perverse and wicked, there is nothing in me but wickedness. It so abounds in me that there is nothing in me but wickedness. It so abounds in me that there is none like me. But, saith the Lord, I am abundant in goodness. Thy wickedness, though it be great, it is but a created wickedness, but my goodness is the goodness of God. I am as abundant in grace and goodness as thou art in sin, nay, infinitely more. Thy sin is but the transgression of a finite creature, but my mercy is the compassion of an infinite God,—it can swallow it up. Suppose thy sin-crycome up to heaven, yet mercy reaches above heaven, and is built up for ever. Here is an invitation to all sinners to come and taste,—O come and taste, and see how good the Lord is. Goodness is communicative; it diffuses itself, like the sun's light. There is riches of his goodness, Rom. ii. 4. Poor soul, thou canst not spend it though thou havemany wants.

But I am full of doubtings, fears and jealousies; I cannot believe in his promises; I often question them. How, then, will he perform them? I say, saith the Lord, I am abundant in truth. He will certainly perform. Shall our unbelief, or doubting, "make the faith of God of none effect?" &c. Rom. iii. 3. God forbid. His faithfulness reaches unto the clouds, he will keep covenant with thee, whose soul hath chosen him, though thou often question and doubt of him. Indeed, thou shouldst not give indulgence to thy doubtings and jealousies, but look on them as high provocations. For what can be more grievous to fervent love than to meet with jealousy? Jealousy would quench any creature's love; but though it grieve and provoke him, yet he will not change, he will not diminish his. Only do not think your disputings and quarrelling

innocent and harmless things. No certainly, they grieve the Spirit, stir up the beloved to go away, as it were, before he please, and make thee walk without comfort, and without fruit. Yet he will bear with, and not quench the smoaking flax of a believer's desires, though they do not arise to the flame of assurance.

But the wounded spirit hath one or two burdens more. I have abused much mercy, how can mercy pity me? I have turned grace into wantonness, so that when I look to mercy and grace to comfort me, they do rather challenge me. The sins of none are like mine; none of such a heinous presumptuous nature. But let us hear what God the Lord speaks. "I keep mercy for thousands, and forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin." Thou hast wasted much mercy, but more is behind; all the treasure is not spent. Though there were many thousand worlds beside, I could pardon them all, if they would flee unto my mercy. Thou shalt not be straitened in me. Mercy will pardon thy abuse of mercy; it will forgive all faults thou dost against itself. Thou that sinnest against the Son of man, the Redeemer of the world, and remedy of sin; yet there is pardon for thee, whatever the quality, condition, or circumstance of thy sin be. Whoever, convinced of it, and loadened with it, desirest rest to thy soul, thou mayest find it in Christ, whose former kindness thou hast answered with contempt. Many sins, many great sins, and these presumptuous sins, cannot exclude, nay, no sin can exclude a willing soul. Unbelief keeps thee unwilling, and so excludes thee.

Now, as the spider sucks poison out of the sweetest flower, so the most part of souls suck nothing but delusion, and presumption, and hardening out of the gospel. Many souls reason for more liberty to sin, from mercy. But behold, how the Lord backs it with a dreadful word, "who will by no means clear the guilty." As many as do not condemn themselves before the tribunal of jnstice, there is no rescinding of the condemnatory sentence, but it stands above your heads, "he that believes not is condemned already." Justice hath condemned all by a sentence. He

that doth not in the sense of this flee unto Jesus Christ from sin and wrath, is already condemned. His sentence is standing, there needs no new one. Since he flees not to mercy for absolution, the sentence of condemnation stands unrepealed. You guilty souls who clear yourselves, God will not clear you. And, alas! how many of you do clear yourselves? Do you not extenuate and mince your sins? How hard is it to extort any confession of guilt out of you, but in the general! If we condescend to particulars, many of you will plead innocency, almost in every thing, though you have, like children, learned to speak these words, that ye are sinners. I beseech you consider it, it is no light matter, for "God will by no means clear the guilty;" by no means, by no intreaties, no flatteries. What! will he not pardon sin? Yes indeed: his name tells you he will pardon all kind of sins, and absolve all manner of guilty persons; but yet such as do condemn themselves, such as are guilty in their own conscience, and their mouths stopped before God. You who do not enter into the serious examination of your ways, and do not arraign yourselves before God's tribunal daily, till you find yourselves loathsome and desperate, and no refuge for you; you who do flatter yourselves always in the hope of heaven, and put the fear of hell always from you, I say, God will by no means, no prayers, no intreaties, clear or pardon you, because you come not to Jesus Christ, in whom is preached forgiveness and remission of sins. You who take liberty to sin, because God is gracious, and delay repentance till the end, because God is long suffering: know God will not clear you; he is holy and just as he is merciful. If his mercy make thee not fear and tremble before him, and do not separate thee from thy sins; if remission of sins be not the strongest persuasion to thy soul of the removing of sin, certainly thou dost in vain presume upon his mercy. Now, consider what influence all this glorious proclamation had on Moses. It stirs up in him reverence and affection, reverence to such a glorious Majesty, and great desire to have him amongst them, and to be more one with him. If

thy soul rightly discover God, it cannot but abase thee. He made haste to bow down and worship. O, God's majesty is a surprising and astonishing thing! It would bow thy soul in the dust if it were presented to thee. Labour to keep the right and entire representation of God in thy sight,—his whole name, strong, merciful, and just; great, good, and holy. I say, keep both in thy view, for half representations are dangerous, either to beget presumption and security, when thou lookest on mercy alone; or despair, when thou lookest on justice and power alone. Let thy soul consider all jointly, that it may receive a mixed impression of all. And this is the holy composition, and temper of a believer,—Rejoice with trembling, love with fear; let all thy discoveries of him aim at more union and communion with him, who is such a self-sufficient, all-sufficient, and eternal Being.

X.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD.

John iv. 24.—God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

We have here something of the nature of God pointed out to us, and something of our duty towards him. God is a Spirit, that is his nature; and man must worship him, that is his duty; and that in spirit and in truth, that is the right manner of the duty. If these three were well pondered till they did sink into the bottom of our spirits, they would make us indeed Christians, not in the letter, but in the spirit. That is presupposed to all Christian worship and walking, to know what God is; it is indeed the *primo cognitum* of Christianity, the first principle of true religion, the very root out of which springs and grows up walking suitably with, and worshipping answerably of, a known God. I fear much of our religion is like the Athenians'; they built an altar to the unknown God, and

like the Samaritans', who worshipped they knew not what. Such a worship, I know not what it is, when the God worshipped is not known. The two parents of true religion are, the knowledge of God and of ourselves. This, indeed, is the beginning of the fear of God, which the wise preacher calls the beginning of true wisdom. And these two, as they beget true religion, so they cannot be one without the other. It is not many notions and speculations about the divine nature, it is not high and strained conceptions of God, that comprises the true knowledge of him. Many think they know something, when they can speak of those mysteries in some singular way, and in some terms removed from common understanding, while neither themselves nor others know what they mean. And thus they are presumptuous, self-conceited, knowing nothing as they ought to know. There is a knowledge that puffs up, and there is a knowledge that casts down, a knowledge in many that doth but swell them, not grow them; it is but a tumour full of wind, a vain and empty, frothy knowledge, that is neither good for edifying others, nor saving a man's self; a knowledge that a man knows and reflects upon, so as to ascend upon the height of it, and measure himself by the degrees of it. This is not the true knowledge of God, which knows not itself, looks not back upon itself, but straight towards God, his holiness and glory, and our baseness and misery, and therefore it constrains the soul to be ashamed of itself in such a glorious presence, and to make haste to worship, as Moses, Job, and Isaiah did.

This definition of God, if we did truly understand it, we could not but worship him in another manner. "God is a Spirit." Many ignorant people form in their own mind some likeness and image of God, who is invisible. You know how ye fancy to yourselves some bodily shape. When you conceive of him, you think he is some reverend and majestic person, sitting on a throne in heaven. But, I beseech you, correct your mistakes of him. There is outward idolatry and there is inward; there is idolatry in

action, when men paint or engrave some similitude of God; and there is idolatry in imagination, when the fancy and apprehension run upon some image or likeness of God. The first is among Papists; but I fear the latter is too common among us; and it is indeed all one, to form such a similitude in our mind, and to engrave or paint it without. So that the God whom many of us worship, is not the living and true God, but a painted or graven idol. When God appeared most visible to the world, as at the giving out of the law, yet no man did see any likeness at all. He did not come under the perception of the most subtle sense; he could not be perceived but by the retired understanding, going aside from all things visible; and therefore you do but fancy an idol to yourselves, instead of God, when you apprehend him under the likeness of any visible or sensible thing; and so whatever love, or fear, or reverence you have, it is all but misspent superstition, the love and fear of an idol.

I. Know then, that God is a Spirit, and therefore he is like none of all those things you see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or touch. The heavens are glorious indeed, the light is full of glory; but he is not like that. If all your senses should make an enquiry, and search for him throughout the world, you should not find him. Though he be near hand every one of us, yet our eyes and ears, and all our senses, might travel the length and breadth of the sea, and should not find him, even as you might search all the corners of heaven, ere you could hear or see an angel. If you would saw a man asunder, and resolve him in atoms of dust, yet you could not perceive a soul within him. Why? Because these are spirits, and so without the reach of your senses.

II. If God be a Spirit, then he is invisible, and dwells in light inaccessible, which no man hath seen or can see. Then our poor narrow minds that are drowned, as it were, and immersed in bodies of clay, and in this state of mortality, receive all knowledge by the senses, cannot frame any suitable notion of his spiritual and abstracted nature.

We cannot conceive what our own soul is, but by some sensible operation flowing from it; and the height that our knowledge of that noble part of ourselves amounts to, is but this dark, and confused conception, that the soul is some inward principle of life, and sense and reason. How then is it possible for us to conceive aright of the divine nature, as it is in itself, but only in a dark and general way? We guess at his majesty, by the glorious emanations of his power, and wisdom, and the rays thereof, which he displays abroad in all the work of his hands; and from all these concurring testimonies, and evidences of his majesty, we gather this confused notion of him, that he is the fountain-self-independent Being, the original of all these things, and more absolute in the world than the soul is in the body; the true *anima mundi,* the very life and the light of men, and the soul that quickens, moves, and forms all this visible world; that makes all things visible, and himself is invisible. Therefore it is that the Lord speaks to us in Scripture of himself, according to our capacities, of his face, his right hand, and arm, his throne, his sceptre, his back parts, his anger, his fury, his repentance, his grief, and sorrow; none of which are properly in his spiritual, immortal, and unchangeable nature. But because our dulness and slowness is such, in apprehending things spiritual, it being almost without the sphere and comprehension of the soul while in the body, which is almost addicted unto the senses in the body; therefore the Lord accommodates himself unto our terms and notions; *balbutit nobiscum,* he, like a kind father, stammers with his stammering children, speaks to them in their own dialect; but withal, would have us conceive he is not really such an one, but infinitely removed in his own being from all these imperfections. So when you hear of these terms in scripture, O beware of conceiving God to be such an one as yourselves! But, in these expressions not beseeming his Majesty, because below him, learn your own ignorance of his glorious Majesty, your dulness and incapacity to be such, as the holy One must

come down as it were in some bodily appearance, ere you can understand any thing of him.

III. If God be a Spirit, then he is most perfect, and most powerful. All imperfection, all infirmity, and weakness in the creature, is founded in the gross and material part of it. You see the more matter and bodily substance is in any thing, it is the more lumpish, heavy, and void of all action. It is the more spiritual, pure, and refined part of the creation, that hath most activity in it, and is the principle of all motions and actions. You see a little fly hath more action in it, than a great mountain, because there are spirits in it which move it. The bottom of the world contains the dregs of the creation, as it were, a mass and lump of heavy earth, but the higher and more distant bodies be from that, the more pure and subtile they are; and the more pure and subtile they be, the more action, virtue, and efficacy they have. The earth stands like a dead lump, but the sea moves, and the air being thinner and purer than both, moves more easily and swiftly. But go up higher, and still the motion is swifter, and the virtue and influence is the more powerful. What is a dead body when the soul and spirit is out of it? It hath no more virtue or efficacy than so much clay, although by the presence of the spirit of it, it was active, agile, swift, strong and nimble. So much then as any thing hath of spirit in it, so much the more perfect and powerful it is. Then I beseech you consider what a one the God of the spirits of all flesh must be, the very Fountain-spirit, the Self-being spirit, *αὐτὸ πνεῦμα*. When the soul of a man, or the spirit of a horse, hath so much virtue, to stir up a lump of earth, and to quicken it to so many diverse operations, even though that soul and spirit did not, nay, could not make that piece of earth they dwell in, then, what must his power and virtue be, that made all those things? Who gave power and virtue, even to the spirits of all flesh? their horses, saith God, are flesh, and not spirit, Isa. xxx.; because, in comparison of his majesty, the very spirits in them, are but like a dead

lump of flesh? If he should draw in his breath, as it were, they would have no more virtue to save the Israelites, than so many lumps of flesh or clay. For he is the Spirit of all spirits, that quickens, actuates, and moves them to their several operations, and influences. *Anima mundi, et anima animarum mundi.* An angel hath more power than all men united in one body. Satan is called the prince of the air, and god of this world, for he hath more efficacy and virtue, to commove the air, and raise tempests, than all the swarms of multiplied mankind, though gathered into one army. If the Lord did not restrain and limit his power, he were able to destroy whole nations at once. An angel killed many thousands of Sennacherib's army in one night; what would many angels do then, if the Lord pleased to apply them to that work? "O what is man that he should magnify himself," or glory in strength, or skill? Beasts are stronger than men, but man's weaker strength being strengthened with more skill, proves stronger than they. But in respect of angels he hath neither strength nor wisdom.

IV. If God be a Spirit, then he is not circumscribed by any place; and if an infinite Spirit, then he is every where, no place can include him, and no body can exclude him. He is within all things, yet not included nor bounded within them, and he is without all things, yet not excluded from them. *Intra omnia, non tamen inclusus in illis; extra omnia, nec tamen exclusus ab illis.* You know every body hath its own bounds and limits circumscribed to it, and shoots out all other bodily things out of the same space, so that before the least body want some space, it will put all the universe in motion, and make every thing about it to change its place, and possess another. But a spirit can pass through all of them, and never disturb them; a legion may be in one man, and have room enough. If there were a wall of brass, or tower, having no opening, neither above nor beneath, no body could enter, but by breaking through, and making a breach into it; but an angel or spirit could storm it without a breach,

and pierce through it without any division of it. How much more doth the Maker of all spirits fill all in all. The thickness of the earth doth not keep him out, nor the largeness of the heavens contain him. How then do we circumscribe and limit him within the bounds of a public house, or the heavens? O! how narrow thoughts have we of his immense greatness, who, without division or multiplication of himself, fills all the corners of the world, whose indivisible unity is equivalent to an infinite extension and divisibility! How often, I pray you, do you reflect upon this? God is near to every one of us. Who of us thinks of a divine Majesty nearer us than our very souls and consciences, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being?" How is it we move, and think not with wonder of that first Mover, in whom we move? How is it we live and persevere in being, and do not always consider this fountain-Being, in whom we live and have our being? O, the atheism of many souls professing God! We do speak, walk, eat, and drink, and go about all our businesses, as if we were self-beings, independent of any; never thinking of that all-present quickening Spirit, that acts us, moves us, speaks in us, makes us to walk, and eat, and drink; as the barbarous people, who see, hear, speak, and reason, and never once reflect upon the principle of all these, to discern a soul within. This is brutish, and in this, man who was made of a straight countenance, to look upward to God, and to know himself and his Maker, till he might be differenced from all creatures below, is degenerated, and become like the beasts that perish. Who of us believes this all-present God? We imagine that he is shut up in heaven, and takes no such notice of affairs below; but certainly, he is not so far from us; though he shew more of his glory above, yet he is as present and observant below.

V. If he be a Spirit, then as he is incomprehensible and immense in being, so also there is no comprehension of his knowledge. The nearer any creature comes to the nature of a spirit, the more knowing and understanding it

is. Life is the most excellent being, and understanding is the most excellent life. *Materia est iners et mortua,* the nearer any thing is to the earthly matter, as it hath less action, so less life and feeling. Man is nearer an angel than beasts, and therefore he hath a knowing understanding spirit in him. There is a spirit in man, and the more or less this spirit of man is abstracted from sensual and material things, it lives the more excellent and pure life, and is, as it were, more or less delivered from the chains of the body. These souls that have never risen above, and retired from sensible things, O! how narrow they are, how captivated within the prison of the flesh! But when the Lord Jesus comes to set free, he delivers a soul from this bondage, he makes these chains fall off, and leads the soul apart to converse with God himself, and to meditate on things not seen,—sin, wrath, hell, and heaven. And the further it goes from itself, and the more abstracted it is from the consideration of present things, the more it lives a life like angels. And therefore, when the soul is separated from the body, it is then perfectly free, and hath the largest extent of knowledge. A man's soul must be almost like Paul's "whether out of the body, or in the body, I know not," if he would understand aright spiritual things. Now then, this infinite Spirit is an all-knowing Spirit, all-seeing Spirit, as well as all-present, "there is no searching of his understanding," Isa. xl. 28. Psal. cxlvii. 5. "Who hath directed his Spirit, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?" Rom. xi. 34. Isa. xl. 13. He calls the generations from the beginning, and known to him are all his works from the beginning. O that you would always set this God before you, or rather set yourselves always in his presence, in whose sight you are always. How would it compose our hearts to reverence and fear in all our actions, if we did indeed believe that the Judge of all the world is an eye-witness to our most retired and secret thoughts and doings! If any man were as privy to thy thoughts, as thy own spirit and conscience, thou wouldst blush and be ashamed before him. If every

one of us could open a window into one another's spirits, I think this assembly should dismiss as quickly as that of Christ's, when he bade them that were without sin cast a stone at the woman. We could not look one upon another. O then, why are we so little apprehensive of the all-searching eye of God, who can even declare to us our thought before it be? How much atheism is rooted in the heart of the most holy! We do not always meditate, with David, Psal. cxxxix, on that all-searching and all-knowing Spirit, "who knows our down-sitting and up-rising, and understands our thoughts afar off, and who is acquainted with all our ways." O! how would we ponder our path, and examine our words, and consider our thoughts before hand, if we set ourselves in the view of such a Spirit, that is within us and without us, before us and behind us. He may spare sinners as long as he pleases, for there is no escaping from him. You cannot go out of his dominions, nay, you cannot run out of his presence, Psal. vii. 8, 9. He can reach you when he pleases, therefore he may delay as long as he pleases.

XI.

THE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP OF GOD.

John iv. 24.—God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

There are two common notions engraven on the hearts of all men by nature, that God is, and that he must be worshipped; and these two live and die together; they are clear, or blotted together. According as the apprehension of God is clear, and distinct, and more deeply engraven on the soul; so is this notion of man's duty of worshipping God, clear and imprinted on the soul; and whenever the actions of men do prove, that the conception of the worship of God is obliterate or worn out; whenever their transgressions do witness, that a man hath

not a lively notion of this duty of God's worship, that doth also prove, that the very notion of a Godhead is worn out, and cancelled in the soul. For how could souls conceive of God as he is indeed, but they must needs, with Moses, Exod. xxxiv, make haste to pray and worship? It is the principle of the very law of nature, which shall make the whole world inexcusable, "because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God." A father must have honour, and a master must have fear; and God, who is the common parent, and absolute master of all, must have worship, in which reverence and fear, mixed with rejoicing and affection, predominate. It is supposed, and put beyond all question that he must be: "he that worships him," &c. It is not simply said, God is a Spirit and must be worshipped; no, for none can doubt of it. If God be, then certainly worship is due to him, for who is so worshipful? And because it is so beyond all question, therefore woe to the irreligious world that never puts it in practice. O, what excuse can you have, who have not so much as a form of godliness? Do you not know, that it is beyond all controversy that God must be worshipped? Why then do you deny it in your practice, which all men must confess in their conscience? Is not he God the Lord, a living and self-being spirit? Then, must he not have worshippers? Beasts are not created for it; it is you, O sons of men, whom he made for his own praise; and it is not more suitable to your natures than it is honourable and glorious. This is the great dignity and excellency you are privileged with, beyond the brute beasts,—to have spirits within you capable of knowing and acknowledging the God of your spirits. Why then do you both rob and spoil God of his glory, and cast away your own excellency? Why do you love to trample on your ornaments and wallow in the puddle, like beasts void of religion, but so much worse than beasts, that you ought to be better, and were created for a more noble design. O base-spirited wretches, who hang down your souls to this earth, and follow the dic-

tates of your own sense and lust, and have not so much as an external form of worshipping God. How far are you come short of the noble design of your creation, and the high end of your immortal souls? If you will not worship God, know, he will have worshippers. Certainly he will not want it; because he hath designed so many souls to stand before him, and worship him, and that number will not fail. He might indeed have wanted worshippers: for what advantage is it to him? But in this he declares his love and respect to man, that he will not want honour and service from him. It is rather to put honour upon him, and to make him blessed and happy, than for any gain can amount to himself by it. For this is indeed the true honour and happiness of man, not to be worshipped and served of other fellow creatures, but to worship and serve the Creator. This is the highest advancement of a soul, to lie low before him, and to obey him, and have our service accepted of his Majesty. I beseech you, strive about this noble service. Since he must have worshippers, O say within your souls, I must be one. If he had but one, I could not be content if I were not that one. Since the Father is seeking worshippers, ver. 23, O let him find thee. Offer thyself to him, saying, Lord, here am I. Should he seek you, who can have no advantage from you? Should he go about so earnest a search for true worshippers, who can have no profit by them? And why do ye not seek him, since to you all the gain and profit redounds? Shall he seek you to make you happy? and why do ye not seek him and happiness in him? It is your own service, I may truly say, and not his so much; for in serving him thou dost rather serve thyself, for all the benefit redounds to thyself, though thou must not intend such an end, to serve him for thyself, but for his name's sake; else thou shalt neither honour him, nor advantage thyself. I pray you let him not seek in vain, for in these afflictions he is seeking worshippers; and if he find you, you are found and saved in-

deed. Do not then forsake your own mercy, to run from him who follows you with salvation.

As none can be ignorant that God is, and must be worshipped, so it is unknown to the world in what manner he must be worshipped. The most part of men have some form in worshipping God, and please themselves in it so well that they think God is well-pleased with it; but few there are who know indeed, what it is to worship him in a manner acceptable to his Majesty. Now you know it is all one not to worship him at all, as not to worship him in that way he likes to be worshipped. Therefore, the most part of men are but self-worshippers, because they please none but themselves in it. It is not the worship his soul hath chosen, but their own invention; for you must take this as an undeniable ground, that God must be worshipped according to his own will and pleasure, and not according to your humour or invention. Therefore, his soul abhors will-worship, devised by men out of ignorant zeal or superstition, though there might seem much devotion in it, and much affection to God. As in the Israelites sacrificing their children, what more seeming self-denial? and yet what more real self-idolatry? God owns not such a service, for it is not service and obedience to his will and pleasure, but to men's own will and humour. Therefore, a man must not look for a reward but from himself. Now, it is not only will-worship, when the matter and substance of the worship is not commanded of God, but also when a commanded worship is not discharged in the appointed manner. Therefore, O how few true worshippers will the Father find? True worship must have truth for the substance, and spirit for the manner of it, else it is not such a worship as the Father seeks and will be pleased with. Divine worship must have truth in it,—that is plain,—but what was that truth? It must be conformed to the rule and pattern of worship, which is God's will and pleasure, revealed in the word of truth. True worship is the very practice of the word of

truth. It carries the image and superscription of a command upon it, which is a necessary ingredient in it, and constituent of it. Therefore, if thy service have the image of thy own will stamped on it, it is not divine worship but will-worship. Thus all human ceremonies and ordinances enjoined for the service of God, carry the inscription not of God, but of man, who is the author and original of them, and so are but adulterated and false coin, that will not pass current with God. I fear there be many rites and vain customs among ignorant people, in which they place some religion, which have no ground in the word of God, but are only old wives' fables and traditions. How many things of that nature are used upon a religious account, in which God hath placed no religion! Many have a superstitious conceit of the public place of worship, as if there were more holiness in it than in any other house; and so they think their prayers in the church are more acceptable than in their chamber. But Christ refutes that superstitious opinion of places, and so consequently of days, meats, and all such external things. The Jews had a great opinion of their temple, the Samaritans of their mountain, as if these places had sanctified their services. But saith our Lord, ver. 21. "The hour cometh when ye shall neither worship in this mountain," &c.; but it is any where acceptable, if so be ye worship in spirit and truth. Many of you account it religion to pray and mutter words of your own in the time of public prayer; but who hath required this at your hands? If ye would pray yourselves, go apart; "shut the door behind thee," saith Christ. Private prayer should be in private and secret; but when public prayer is, your hearts should close with the petitions, and offer them up jointly to God. It is certainly a great sleight of that deceitful destroyer, the devil, to possess your minds with an opinion of religion, in such vain babblings, that he may withdraw both your ears and your hearts from the public worship of God; for when every one is busied with his own prayers, you cannot at all join in the public

service of God, which is offered up in your name. The like I may say of stupid forms of prayer, and tying yourselves to a platform, written in a book, or to some certain words gotten by the heart. Who hath commanded this? Sure, not the Lord, who hath promised his Spirit to teach them to pray, and help their infirmities, who know not how, nor what to pray. It is a device of your own, invented by Satan to quench the spirit of supplication, which should be the very natural breathing of a Christian. But there are some so grossly ignorant of what prayer is, that they make use of the ten commandments, and creed, as a prayer. So void are they of the knowledge and Spirit of God, that they cannot discern betwixt God's commands to themselves and their own requests to God; betwixt his speaking to men, and their speaking to him; between their professing of him before men, and praying and confessing to him. All this is but forged, imaginary worship, worship falsely so called, which the Father seeks not, and receives not.

But what if I should say, that the most part of your worship, even that which is commanded of God, as prayer, hearing, reading, &c. hath no truth in it, I should say nothing amiss. For though you do those things that are commanded, yet not as commanded, without any respect to divine appointment, and only because you have received them as traditions from your fathers, and because ye are taught so by the precepts of men, and are accustomed so to do; therefore the stamp of God's will and pleasure is not engraven on them, but of your own will, or of the will of men. Let me pose your consciences, many of you, what difference is there between your praying and your plowing; between your hearing, and your harrowing; between your reading in the Scriptures, and your reaping in the harvest; between your religious service and your common ordinary actions; I say, what difference is there in the rise of these? You do many civil things out of custom, or because of the precepts of men; and is there any other principle at the bottom of your re-

ligious performances? Do you at all consider, these are divine appointments, and have a stamp of his authority on them? and from the conscience of such an immediate command of God, and the desire to please him and obey him, do you go about these? I fear many cannot say it. O! I am sure all cannot, though it may be all will say it. Therefore your worship can come in no other account, than will-worship, or man-worship. It hath not the stamp of truth on it, an express conformity to the truth of God as his truth.

But we must press this out a little more. Truth is opposed to ceremony and shadow. The ceremonies of old were shadows, or the external body of religion, in which the soul and spirit of godliness should have been inclosed; but the Lord did always urge more earnestly the substance and truth, than the ceremony,—the weightier matters of the law, piety, equity, and sobriety, than these lighter external ceremonies. He sets an higher account upon mercy than sacrifice, and upon obedience than ceremonies. But this people turned it just contrary. They summed up all their religion in some ceremonial performance, and separated those things, God had so nearly conjoined. They would be devout men in offering sacrifices, in their washings, in their rites, and yet made no conscience of heart and soul piety towards God, and upright just dealing with men. Therefore the Lord so often quarrels with them, and rejects all their service as being a device and invention of their own, which never entered into his heart, Isa. i. 10—16. Jer. vii. throughout, Isa lxvi. 6. Isa. xxviii. Now if you will examine it impartially it is even just so with us. There are some external things in religion, which in comparison with the weightier things of faith and obedience are but ceremonial. In these you place the most part if not all your religion, and think yourselves good Christians, if you be baptized, and hear the word, and partake of the Lord's table, and such like, though in the meantime you be not given to secret prayer, and reading, and do not inwardly judge and examine yourselves, that ye may flee unto a Mediator; though your conversation be un-

just and scandalous among men. I say unto such souls, as the Lord unto the Jews, "who hath required this at your hands?" Who commanded you to hear the word, to be baptized, to wait on public ordinances? Away with all this; it is abomination to his majesty. Though it please you never so well, the more it displeases him. If you say, Why commands he us to hear? &c. I say, the Lord never commanded these external ordinances for the sum of true religion; that was not the great thing which was in his heart, that he had most pleasure unto, but the weightier matters of the law, piety, equity and sobriety, a holy and godly conversation adorning the gospel: "what hath the Lord required of thee, but this, O man, to do justly, and walk humbly with thy God?" So then, thou dost not worship him in truth, but in a shadow. The truth, is holiness and righteousness. The external profession is but a ceremony. While you separate these external ordinances from these weighty duties of piety and justice, they are but as a dead body without a soul. If the Lord required truth of old, much more now, when he hath abolished the multitude of ceremonies, that the great things of his law may be more seen and loved.

If you would then be true worshippers, look to the whole mind of God, and especially the chief pleasure of God's mind, that which he most delights in; and by any means do not separate what God hath conjoined. Do not divide righteousness towards men from a profession of holiness to God, else it is but a falsehood, a counterfeit coin. Do not please yourselves so much in external church privileges, without a holy and godly conversation adorning the gospel; but let the chief study, endeavour, and delight of your souls be about that which God most delights in. Let the substantials of religion have the first place in the soul. Pray more in secret; that will be the life of your souls. You ought, indeed, to attend public ordinances; but, above all, take heed to your conversation and walking at home, and in secret. Prayer in your family is a more substantial worship than to sit and hear prayer in public; and

prayer in secret is more substantial than that. The more retired and immediate a duty be, the more weighty it is; the more it crosses thy corruptions, and evidences the stamp of God on thy affections, the more divine it is; and therefore to serve God in these, is to serve him in truth. Practice hath more of truth in it than a profession. "When your fathers executed judgment, was not this to know me?" Duties that have more opposition from our natures against them, and less fuel or oil to feed the flame of our self-love and corruptions, have more truth in them; and if you should worship God in all other duties, and not especially in these, you do not worship him in truth.

Next, Let us consider the manner of divine worship; and this is as needful to true worship as true matter, that it be commanded, and done as it is commanded,—that completes true worship. Now, I know no better way, or manner, to worship God in, than so to worship him, as our worship may carry the stamp of his image upon it, as it may be a glass wherein we may behold God's nature and properties. For such as himself is, such he would be acknowledged to be. I would think it were true worship indeed, which had engraven on it the name of the true and living God, if it did speak out so much of itself, "That God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him diligently." Most part of our service speaks an unknown God, and carries such an inscription upon it, "To the unknown God." There is so little either reverence, or love, or fear, or knowledge in it, as if we did not worship the true God, but an idol. It is said, that the fool "says in his heart, that there is no God," because his thoughts, and affections, and actions are so little composed to the fear and likeness of that God, as if he did indeed plainly deny him. I fear, it may be said thus of our worship: It says, There is no God. It is of such a nature, that none could conclude from it, that it had any relation to the true God. Our prayers deny God, because there is nothing of God appears in them. But this is true worship, when it renders back to God his own image and name:

Unde repercussus redditur ipse sibi. As it is a pure fountain, in which a man may see his shadow distinctly, but a troubled fountain or mire in which he cannot behold himself; so it is pure worship, which receives and reflects the pure image of God, but impure and unclean worship, which cannot receive and return it. I pray you, Christians, consider this, for it is such worshippers the Father seeks; and why seeks he such? but because in them he finds himself. So to speak, his own image and superscription is upon them, his mercy is engraven on their faith and confidence; his majesty and power is stamped on their humility and reverence; his goodness is to be read in the soul's rejoicing, his greatness and justice in the soul's trembling. Thus there ought to be some engravings on the soul, answering the characters of his glorious name. O how little of this is among them that desire to know something of God! How little true worship, even among them whom the Father hath sought out to make true worshippers! But alas! how are all of us unacquainted with this kind of worship! We stay upon the first principles and practices of religion, and go not on to build upon the foundation. Sometimes your worship hath a stamp of God's holiness and justice, in fear and terror at such a Majesty, which makes you to tremble before him; but where is the stamp of his mercy and grace which should be written in your faith and rejoicing? Tremble and fear indeed, but rejoice with trembling, because there is mercy with him. Sometime there is rejoicing and quietness in the soul, but that quickly degenerates into carnal confidence, and makes the soul turn grace into wantonness, and esteem of itself above what is right, because it is not counterpoised with the sense and apprehension of his holiness and justice; but O to have these jointly written on the heart, in worship, fear, reverence, confidence, humility, and faith! That is a rare thing: it is a divine composition and temper of spirit that makes a divine soul. For the most part, our worship savours and smells nothing of God, neither his power, nor his mercy and grace, nor his holiness and jus-

tice, nor his majesty and glory; a secure, faint, formal way, void of reverence, of humility, of fervency, and of faith. I beseech you let us consider, as before the Lord, how much pains and time we lose, and please none but ourselves, and profit none at all. Stir up yourselves as in his sight; for it is the keeping of our souls continually as in his sight, which will stamp our service with his likeness. The fixed and constant meditation on God and his glorious properties, this will beget the resemblance between our worship and the God whom we worship, and it will imprint his image upon it, and then it should please him, and then it should profit thee, and then it should edify others.

But more particularly: true worship must have the stamp of God's spiritual nature, and be conformed to it in some measure, else it cannot please him. There must be a conformity between God and souls. This is the great end of the gospel, to repair that image of God which was once upon man, and make him like God again. Now, it is this way that Jesus Christ repairs this image, and brings about the conformity with God, by the soul's worshipping of God suitable to his nature, which, as it grows more and more suitable to God's nature, it is the more and more like God, and happy in that likeness. Now, "God is a Spirit," therefore (saith Christ) you "must worship him in spirit and in truth." The worship then of saints must be of a spiritual nature, that it may be like the immortal divine Spirit. It is such worshippers the Father seeks. He seeks souls to make them like himself, and this likeness and conformity to God is the very foundation of the soul's happiness, and eternal refreshment.

This is a point of great consequence, and I fear not laid to heart. The worship must be like the worshipped. It is a spirit must worship the eternal Spirit. It is not a body that can be the principal and chief agent in the business. What communion can God have with your bodies, while your souls are removed far from him, more than with beasts? All society and fellowship must be be-

tween those that are like one another. A man can have no comfortable company with beasts, or with stones, and trees. It is men that can converse with men; and a spirit must worship the self-being Spirit. Do not mistake this, as if under the days of the gospel we were not called to an external and bodily worship, to any service to which our outward man is instrumental. That is one of the deep delusions of this age, into which some men, reprobate concerning the faith, have fallen, that there should be no external ordinances, but that Christians are now called to a worship, all spirit, pure spirit, &c.* This is one of the spirits, and spiritual doctrines (that call themselves so) which ye must not receive; for it is neither the Spirit of God nor of Christ that teacheth this. Not the Spirit of God the Creator, because he hath made the whole man, body and soul, and so must be worshipped of the whole man. He hath created man in such a capacity as he may offer up external actions in a reasonable manner with the inward affections. As the Lord hath created him, so should he serve him every member, every part in its own capacity; the soul to precede, and the body to follow; the soul to be the chief worshipper, and the body its servant employed in the worship. True worship hath a body and a soul as well as a true man; and as the soul separated is not a complete man, so neither is the soul separated a complete worshipper without the body. The external ordinances of God is the body, the inward soul-affection is the spirit, which being joined together make complete worship. Neither is it the Spirit of Christ which teacheth this, because our Lord Jesus hath taught us to offer up our bodies and spirits both as a reasonable service, Rom. xii. 1, 2. The sacrifice of the bodily performance offered up by the spiritual affection and renewed mind is a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, and reasonable.

* The reader will remember that these discourses were written and preached about the time of the rise of Quakerism in England; and when the extravagances of the Quakers and other sectaries were a matter of public notoriety and discussion.

That Spirit which dwelt in Christ above measure, did not think it too base to vent itself in the way of external ordinances. He was, indeed, above all, above the law, yet did willingly come under them, to teach us, who have so much need and want, to come under them. He prayed much, he preached, he did sing and read, to teach us how to worship, and how much need we have of prayer and preaching. This was not the Spirit Christ promised to his disciples and apostles, which spirit did breathe most lively in the use of external ordinances, all their days; and this is not the spirit which was at that hour in which Christ spoke, "the hour is come and now is," ver. 23, in which the true worship of God shall not be in the external Jewish ceremonies and rites, void of all life and inward sense of piety. But the true worship of God shall be made up of a soul and body, of spirit and truth, of the external appointed ordinances according to the word of truth, and the spirit of truth; and of the spirit and inward soul affection and sincerity, which shall quicken and actuate that external performance. There were no such worshippers then as had no use of ordinances. Christ was not such, his disciples were not such; therefore it is a new gospel, which, if an angel should bring from heaven, ye ought not to receive it.

As it is certain then, that both soul and body must be employed in this business, so it is sure that the soul and spirit must be the first mover and chiefest agent in it, because it is a spiritual business, and hath relation to the Fountain-spirit, which hath the most perfect opposition to all false appearances and external shews. That part of man that cometh nearest God, must draw nearest in worshipping God; and if that be removed far away, there is no real communion with God. Man judges according to the outward appearance, and can reach no farther than the outward man; but God is an all-searching Spirit, who trieth the heart and reins, and therefore he will pass another judgment upon your worship than men can do, because he observes all the secret wanderings and escapes

of the heart out of his sight. He misses the soul when you present attentive ears or eloquent tongues. There is no dallying with his Majesty; painting will not deceive him, his very nature is contrary to hypocrisy and dissimulation; and what is it but dissimulation, when you present yourselves to religious exercises as his people, but within are nothing like it, nothing awaking, nothing present? O consider, my beloved, what a one you have to do with! It is not men, but the Father of spirits, who will not be pleased with what pleases men, of your own flesh, but must have a spirit to serve him. Alas! what are we doing with such empty names and shows of religion? Busied in the outside of worship only, as if we had none to do with but men who have eyes of flesh. All that we do in this kind is lost labour, and will never be reckoned up in the account of true worship. I am sure you know and may reflect upon yourselves, that you make religion but a matter of outward fashion and external custom; you have never almost taken it to heart in earnest. You may frequent the ordinances, you may have a form of godliness consisting in some outward performances and privileges, and O! how void and destitute of all spirit and life, and power! Not to speak of the removal of affection and the employing of the marrow of your soul upon base lusts and creatures, or the scattering of your desires abroad amongst them, for that is too palpable. But even your very thoughts and minds are removed from this business, you have nothing present but an ear, or eye, and your minds are about other business; your desires, your fears, your joys, and delights, your affections, never did run in the channel of religious exercises; all your passion is vented in other things. But here you are blockish and stupid, without any sensible apprehension of God, his mercy, or justice, or wrath, or of your own misery and want. You sorrow in other things, but none here, none for sin; you joy for other things, but none here, you cannot rejoice at the gospel. Prayer is a burden, not a delight. If your spirits were chiefly employed in religious duties,

religion would be almost your element, your pleasure and recreation; but now it is wearisome to the flesh, because the spirit taketh not the chief weight upon it. Oh! be not deceived, God is not mocked. You do but mock yourselves with external shows, while you are satisfied with them. I beseech you, look inwardly, and be not satisfied with the outward appearance, but ask at thy soul, where it is, and how it is. Retire within, and bring up thy spirit to this work. I am sure you may observe that any thing goes more smoothly and sweetly with you than the worship of God, because your mind is more upon any thing else. I fear the most part of us who endeavour, in some measure, to seek God, have too much dross of outward formality, and much scum of filthy hypocrisy and guile. O! pray that the present furnace may purge away this scum. It is the great ground of God's present controversy with Scotland; but, alas! the bellows are like to burn, and we not to be purged. Our scum goes not out from us. We satisfy ourselves with some outward exercises of religion. Custom undoes us all; and it was never more undoing than when indignation and wrath are pursuing it. O! that you would ponder what you lose by it, both the sweetness and advantage of godliness, beside the dishonour of God. You take a formal, negligent, and secure way, as the most easy way, and the most pleasing to your flesh; and I am persuaded you find it the most difficult way, because you want all the pleasant and sweet refreshments and soul delights you might have in God, by a serious and diligent minding of religion. The pleasure and sweetness of God tasted and found, will make diligence and pains more easy, than slothfulness can be to the slothful. This oils the wheels, and makes them drive swiftly; formality makes them drive heavily. Thus you live always in a complaining humour, sighing, and going backward, because you have some stirring principle of conscience within which bears witness against you; and your formal sluggish disposition on the other hand refuses to awake and work. You are perplexed and tormented

between these two. When thy spirit and affections go one way, and thy body another; when thy conscience drives on the spirit, and thy affections draw back, it must needs be an unpleasant business.

XII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY.

Deuter. vi. 4.—Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.
1 John v. 7.—There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.

"GREAT is the mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Religion and true godliness is a bundle of excellent mysteries, of things hid from the world, yea, from the wise men of the world, 1 Cor. ii.; and not only so, but secrets in their own nature, the distinct knowledge whereof is not given to saints in this estate of distance and absence from the Lord. There is almost nothing in divinity, but it is a mystery in itself, how common soever it be in the apprehensions of men. For it is men's overly [*i. e.* superficial]; and common and slender apprehensions of them, which make them look so commonly upon them. There is a depth in them, but you will not know it, till you search it, and sound it; and the more you sound, you shall find it the more profound. But there are some mysteries small and some great. There is a difference amongst them, all are not of one stature, of one measure. The mystery of Christ's incarnation, and death, and resurrection, is one of the great mysteries of religion, "God manifest in the flesh." Yet I conceive there is a greater mystery than it, and of all mysteries in nature or divinity I know none equal to this, the Holy Trinity; and it must needs be greatest of all, and without controversy greatest, because it is the beginning and end of all, *fons et finis omnium*. All mysteries have their rise here, and all of them return hither. This is furthest removed from the understand-

ings of men,—what God himself is, for himself is infinitely above any manifestation of himself. God is greater than God manifested in the flesh, though in that respect he be too great for us to conceive. There is a natural desire in all men to know; and, if any thing be secret and wonderful, the desire is more inflamed after the knowledge of it. The very difficulty or impossibility of attaining it, instead of restraining the curiosity of man's spirit, doth rather incense it. *Nitimur in vetitum* is the fruit, the sad fruit we plucked, and eat, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If the Lord reveal any thing plainly in his word to men, that is despised and set at nought, because it is plain; whereas the most plain truths, which are beyond all controversy, are the most necessary, and most profitable for our eternal salvation. But if there be any secret mystery in the Scriptures, which the Lord hath only pointed out more obscurely to us, reserving the distinct and clear understanding of it to himself, Deut. xxix. 26,—that is the apple which our accursed natures will long for, and catch after, though there be never so much choice of excellent saving fruit in the paradise of the Scriptures besides. If the ark be covered to keep men from looking into it, that doth rather provoke the curious spirit of man to pry into it, 1 Sam. vi. 19. If the Lord shew his wonderful glory in the mount, and charge his people not to come near, lest the glorious presence of God kill them, he must put rails about it, to keep them back, or else they will be meddling. Such is the unbridled licence of our minds, and the perverse disposition of our natures, that where God familiarly invites us to come,—what he earnestly presseth us to search and know, that we despise as trivial and common. And what he compasseth about with a divine darkness of inaccessible light, and hath removed far from the apprehensions of all living, that we will needs search into, and wander into those forbidden compasses, with daring boldness. I conceive this holy and profound mystery is one of those secrets which it belongs to God to know; for who know-

eth the Father but the Son, or the Son but the Father, or who knoweth the mind of God but the Spirit? Yet the foolish minds of men will not be satisfied with the believing ignorance of such a mystery, but will needs enquire into those depths, that they may find satisfaction for their reason. But as it happeneth with men who will boldly stare upon the sun, their eyes are dazzled and darkened with its brightness; or those that enter into a labyrinth, which they can find no way to come out, but the further they go into it, the more perplexed it is, and the more intricate; even so it befalls many unsober and presumptuous spirits, who, not being satisfied with the simple truth of God, clearly asserting that this is, endeavour to examine it according to reason, and to solve all the objections of carnal wit and reason, (which is often enmity to God,) not by the silence of the Scriptures, but by answers framed according to the several capacities of men. I say, all this is but daring to behold the infinite glory of God with eyes of flesh, which makes them darkened in mind, and vanishing in their expression, while they seek to behold this inaccessible light, while they enter into an endless labyrinth of difficulties, out of which the thread of reason and disputation can never extricate them or lead them forth. But the Lord hath shewed us a more excellent way, though it may be despicable to men. Man did fall from blessedness, by his curious and wretched aim at some higher happiness, and more wisdom. The Lord hath chosen another way to raise him up again by faith, rather than knowledge, by believing rather than disputing; therefore the great command of the gospel is this, to receive with a ready and willing mind, whatsoever the Lord saith to us, whatsoever it may appear to sense and reason; to dispute no more, to search no more into the secret of divine mysteries, as if by searching we could find them out unto perfection, but to believe what is spoken, "till the day break, and the shadows flee away," and the darkness of ignorance be wholly dispelled, by the rising of the Sun of righteousness. We are called then to receive this

truth,—That God is one, truly one, and yet there are three in this one, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This, I say, you must believe, because the wisdom of God saith it, though you know not how it is, or how it can be. Though it seem a contradiction in reason, a trinity in unity, yet you must lead your reason captive to the obedience of faith, and silence it with this one answer, The Lord hath said it. If thou go on to dispute, and to enquire, how can these things be? thou art escaped from under the power of faith, and art fled into the tents of human wisdom, where thou mayest learn atheism, but no religion; "for the world through wisdom knew not God," 1 Cor. i. And certainly, whoever he be that will not quiet his conscience, upon the bare word of truth in this particular, but will call in the help of reason and disputation, how to understand and maintain it, I think he shall be further from the true knowledge of God, and satisfaction of mind than before. There is no way here, but to flee into Paul's sanctuary, "who art thou O man that disputest?" Whenever thou thinkest within thyself, how may this be? how can one be three, and three one? then withal let this of Paul sound in thine ears, "who art thou, O man, who disputest?" Think that thou art man, think that he is God. Believing ignorance is much better than rash and presumptuous knowledge. Ask not a reason of these things, but rather adore and tremble at the mystery and majesty of them. Christianity is foolishness to the world upon this account, because it is an implicit faith, so to speak, given to God. But there is no fear of being deceived, though he lead the blind by a way thou knowest not, yet he cannot lead thee wrong. This holy simplicity in believing every word of God, and trusting without more trying by disputation, is the very character of Christianity, and it would be found only true wisdom. For if any will become wise, he must be a fool in men's account. That he may be wise, he must quit his reason to learn true religion, which indeed is a more excellent

and divine reason; neither is it contrary to it, though it be high above it.

In this place of Moses, you have the unity of God asserted, "the Lord thy God is one Lord;" and it is indeed engraven on the very hearts of men by nature, that God is one. For all may know, that the common notion and apprehension of God, is, that he is a most perfect Being, the original of all things, most wise, most powerful, and infinite in all perfections. Now common reason may tell any man, that there can be but one thing most perfect and excellent, there can be but one infinite, one almighty, one beginning and end of all, one first mover, one first cause, of whom are all things, and who is of none.

Again, in this place of John, ye have a testimony of the blessed trinity of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in that holy union of essence. The great point which John hath in hand, is this fundamental of our salvation, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, in whom all our confidence should be placed, and upon whom we should lean the weight of our souls. And this he proves by a two-fold testimony, one out of heaven, another in the earth. There are three bearing witness to this truth in heaven, "the Father, the Word, (that is, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, whom this apostle calls the Word of God, or Wisdom of God, John i. 1.) and the Holy Ghost." The Father witnessed to this truth in an audible voice out of heaven, when Christ was baptized, Mat. iii. 17., "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." Here is the Father's testimony of the Son when he was baptized, which was given very solemnly in a great congregation of people, and divinely, with great glory and majesty from heaven; as if the heavens had opened upon him, and the inaccessible light of God had shined down on him. This was confirmed in the transfiguration, Mat. xvii. 5., where the Lord gave a glorious evidence, to the astonishment of the three disciples, how he did ac-

count of him; how all saints and angels must serve him; "him hath God the Father sealed," saith John. Indeed, the stamp of divinity, of the divine image, in such an excellent manner upon the man Christ, was a seal set on by God the Father, signifying and confirming his approbation of his well-beloved Son, and of the work he was going about. Then the Son himself did give ample testimony of this. This was the subject of his preaching to the world, "I am the light and the life of men; he that believeth on me shall be saved." And therefore he may be called the Word of God, and the Wisdom of God, John i. 1. Prov. viii., because he hath revealed unto us the blessed mystery of wisdom concerning our salvation. He is the very expression and character of the Father's person and glory, Heb. i., in his own person; and he hath revealed and expressed his Father's mind, and his own office, so fully to the world, that there should be no more doubt of it. Out of the mouth of these two witnesses this word might be established; but, for superabundance, behold a third, the Holy Ghost witnessing at his baptism, in his resurrection, after his ascension. The Holy Ghost signifieth his presence and consent to that work, in the similitude of a dove; the Holy Ghost testifieth it in the power that raised him from the dead; the Holy Ghost put it beyond all question, when he descended upon the apostles according to Christ's promise. For the other three witnesses on earth, we shall not stay upon it; only know, that the work of the regeneration of souls by the power of the Word and Spirit signified by water, the justification of guilty souls signified by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the testimony of the Spirit in our consciences, bearing witness to our spirits, is an assured testimony of this, that Jesus Christ, in whom we believe, is "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The changing, pacifying, and comforting of souls in such a wonderful manner, cries aloud, that he in whom the soul believes, is the true and living God, "whom to know is eternal life." But mark, I pray you, the accuracy of the apostle

in the change of speech. These three witnesses on earth, saith he, agree in one, in giving one common testimony to the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners. But as for the heavenly witnesses, the Father, the Word, and Holy Ghost, however they be three after an inconceivable manner, and that they do also agree in one common testimony to the Mediator of men, yet moreover they are One. They not only agree in one, but are one God, one simple, undivided, self-being, infinite Spirit, holden out to us in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom be praise and glory.

XIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY INSTRUCTIVE AND CONSOLATORY.

Deut. vi. 4.—Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord. Job v. 7.—Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and it is profitable for instruction, for direction," &c. There is no refuse in it. No simple and plain history, but it tends to some edification; no profound or deep mystery, but it is profitable for salvation. Whatsoever secrets there be in the mysteries of God, which are reserved from us, though it be given us but to know in part, and darkly through a vail; yet as much is given to us to know, as may make the man of God perfect in every good work. As much is given us to know, as may build us up to eternal salvation. If there were no more use of these deep mysteries of the holy Trinity, &c. but to silence all flesh, and restrain the unlimited spirits of men, and keep them within the bounds of sobriety and faith, it were enough. That great secret would teach as much by its silence and darkness, as the plainer truths do by speaking out clearly. O that this great mystery did compose our hearts to some reverend and awful apprehension of that God we have to do with, and did imprint in our soul a more feeling sense of our

darkness and ignorance! This were more advantage than all the gain of light, or increase of knowledge that can come from the search of curiosity. If men would labour to walk in that light they have attained, rather than curiously inquire after what they cannot know by inquiry, they should sooner attain more true light. If men would set about the practice of what they know, without doubt they would more readily come to a resolution and clearness in doubtful things. Religion is now turned into questions and school debates. Men begin to believe nothing, but dispute every thing, under a pretence of searching for light and resolution. But for the most part, while men look after light, they darken themselves; and this is the righteous judgment of the Lord upon the world that doth not receive the truth in love, or walk in the light of what they have already attained; therefore he gives men up to wander in their search into the dark dungeons of human wisdom and fancy, and to lose what they have already. If those things which are without all controversy (as the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. iii. 16.) were indeed made conscience of, and embraced in love, and practised, it were beyond all controversy, that the most part of present controversies would cease. But it falls out with many, as with the dog, that, catching at a shadow in the water, lost the substance in his teeth; so, they pursuing after new discoveries in controverted things, and not taking a heart-hold and inward grip of the substantial truths of the gospel, which are beyond all controversy, do even lose what they have. Thus, even that which they have is taken from them, because though they have it in judgment, yet they have it not surely and solidly in affection, that it may be holden. So, to this present point if we could learn to adore and admire this holy, holy, holy One; if we could in silence and faith sit down and wonder at this mystery, it would be more profitable to us, and make way for a clearer manifestation of God, than if we should search and inquire into all the volumes that are written upon it, thinking by this means to satisfy our reason. I think

there is more profoundness in the sobriety of faith than in the depths of human wisdom and learning. When the mystery is such an infinite depth, O ! but men's eloquence and wisdom must be shallow, far too shallow either to find it out, or unfold it.

But there is yet both more instruction and consolation to be pressed out of this mystery ; and, therefore, if you cannot reach it in itself, O consider what it concerns us, how we may be edified by it, for this is true religion ! Look upon that place of Moses, what is the great instruction he draws from this unity of God's essence, v. 5. " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Since God is one, then have no God but one, and that the true and living God ; and this is the very first command of God, which flows as it were immediately from his absolute oneness and perfection of being. There is no man but he must have some God, that is, something whereupon he placeth his affection most. Every man hath some one thing he loves and respects beyond all other things, some Lord and master that commands him. Therefore, saith Christ, " no man can serve two masters." Before a man will want a god to love and serve, he will make them, and then worship them. Yea, he will make himself, his belly, his back, his honour, and pleasure, a god, and sacrifice all his affections, and desires, and endeavours to these. The natural subordination of man to God, the relation he hath as a creature to a Creator, is the first and fundamental relation, beyond all respects to himself, or other fellow-creatures. This is the proto-natural obligation upon the creature ; therefore it should have returned in a direct line to his majesty all its affections and endeavours. But man's fall from God hath made a wretched thraw [*i. e.* bend or twist] and crook in the soul, that it cannot look any more after him, but bows downwards towards creatures below it, or bends inwardly towards itself ; and so since the fall man hath turned his heart from the true God, and set it upon vanity, upon lying vanities, upon base dead idols, which can neither help him, nor hurt him. Your

hearts are gone a whoring from God, O that ye would believe it! None of you will deny, but ye have broken all the commands. Yet such is the brutish ignorance and stupidity of the most part, that you will not confess that, when it comes to particulars, and especially, if you should be challenged for loving other things more than God, or having other gods besides the true God, you will instantly deny it, and that with an asseveration and aversation,—God forbid that I have another God. Alas! this shews, that what you confess in the general is not believed in the heart, but only is like the prating of children, whom you may learn to say any thing. I beseech you consider, that what you give your time, pains, thoughts, and affections to, that is your God,—you must give God all your heart, and so retain nothing of your own will if God be your God. But do ye not know that your care, and grief, and desire, and love, vents another way, towards base things? You know, that you have a will of your own, which goeth quite contrary to his holy will in all things: therefore Satan hath bewitched you, and your hearts deceive you when they persuade you that you have had no other God but the true God. Christianity raises the soul again, and advances it by degrees to this love of God, from which it had fallen. The soul returns to its first husband, from whom it went a-whoring, and now the stamp of God is so upon it, that it is changed into his image and glory. Having tasted how good this one self-sufficient good is, it gladly and easily divorces from all other lovers. It renounces former lusts of ignorance, and now begins to live in another. Love transplants the soul into God, and in him it lives, and with him it walks. It is true, this is done gradually, there is much of the heart yet unbroken to this sweet and easy yoke of love, much of the corrupt nature untamed, unreclaimed; yet so much is gained by the first conversion of the soul to God, that all is given up to him in affection and desire. He hath the chief place in the soul. The disposition of the spirit hath some stamp and impression of his oneness and singularity. My beloved

is one. Though a Christian is not wholly rid of strange Lords, yet the tie of subjection to them is broken. They may often intrude by violence upon him but he is in a hostile posture of affection and endeavour against them. I beseech you, since the Lord is one, and there is none beside him, O! let this be engraven on your hearts, that your inward affections and outward actions may express that one Lord to be your God, and none other beside him! It is a great shame and reproach to Christians, that they do not carry the stamp of the first principle of religion upon their walking. The condition and conversation of many declare how little account they make of the true God. Why do ye enslave your souls to your lusts, and the service of the flesh, if ye believe in this one God? Why do ye all things to please yourselves if this one Lord be your one God? As for you, the Israel of God, who are called by Jesus Christ to partake with the commonwealth of Israel, in the covenant of promises, hear, I beseech you, this, and let your souls incline to it, and receive it. Your God is one Lord: have, then no other lords over your souls and consciences; not yourselves, not others.

But in the next place, Let us consider to what purpose John leads such three witnesses, that we may draw some consolation from it. The thing testified and witnessed unto, is the ground-work of all a Christian's hope and consolation, that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, and Saviour of the world, one able to save to the uttermost all that put their trust in him, so that every soul that finds itself lost, and not able to subsist, nor abide the judgment of God, may repose their confidence in him, and lay the weight of their eternal welfare upon his death and sufferings, with assurance to find rest and peace in him in their souls. He is such an one as faith may triumph in him over the world, and all things beside. A believer may triumph in his victory, and in the faith of his victory, over hell, and death, and the grave; may overcome personally, "For this is our victory over the world, even our faith," ver. 4. And how could a soul conquer by faith, if he in whom it

believes were not declared to be the Son of God with power? There is nothing so mean and weakly as faith in itself. It is a poor despicable thing of itself, and that it acknowledges. Yea, faith is a very act of self-denial. It is a renouncing of all help without and within itself, save only that which is laid on Christ Jesus. Therefore it were the most unsuitable mean of prevailing, and the most insufficient weapon for gaining the victory, if the object of it were not the strong God, the Lord Almighty, from whom it derives and borrows all its power, and virtue, either to pacify the conscience, or to expiate sin, or to overcome the world. O! consider, Christians, where the foundation of your hopes is situated. It is in the divine power of our Saviour. If he who declared so much love and good will to sinners, by becoming so low, and suffering so much, have also all power in heaven and earth; if he be not only man near us, to make for us boldness of access, but God near God, to prevail effectually with God, then certainly he is a sure foundation laid in Zion, elect and precious. He is an immoveable Rock of Ages, whosoever trusts their soul to him shall not be ashamed. I am sure that many of you consider not this, that Jesus Christ, who was in due time born of the virgin Mary, and died for sinners, is the eternal Son of God, equal to his Father in all glory and power. O how would this make the gospel a great mystery to souls! and the redemption of souls a precious and wonderful work, if it were considered. Would not souls stand at this anchor immoveable in temptation, if their faith were pitched on this sure foundation, and their hope cast upon this solid ground. O know your Redeemer is strong and mighty, and none can pluck you out of his hand, and himself will cast none out that come. If the multitude of you believed this, you would not make so little account of the gospel that comes to you, and make so little of your sins which behoved to be taken away by the blood of God, and could be expiated by no other propitiation; you would not think it so easy to satisfy God with some words of custom, and some public services of

form, as you do. You would not for all the world deal with God alone without this Mediator. And being convinced of sin, if you believed this solidly, that he in whom forgiveness of sin and salvation is preached, is the same Lord God whom you hear in the Old Testament, who gave out the law, and inspired the prophets, the only begotten of the Father, in a way infinitely removed from all created capacities, you could not but find the Father well satisfied in him, and find a sufficient ransom in his death and doings to pacify God, and to settle your consciences.

But as the thing testified is a matter of great consolation, so the witnesses testifying to this fundamental of our religion may be a ground of great encouragement to discouraged souls. It is ordinary, that the apprehensions of Christians take up Jesus Christ as very lovely, and more loving than any of the persons of the Godhead, either the Father or the Holy Ghost. There are some thoughts of estrangedness and distance of the Father, as if the Son did really reconcile and gain him to love us, who before hated us; and upon this mistake, the soul is filled with continual jealousies and suspicions of the love of God. But observe, I beseech you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all of them first agreeing in one testimony. The Father declares from heaven, that he is abundantly well-pleased with his Son, not only because he is his Son, but even in the undertaking and performing of that work of redemption of sinners. It is therefore his most serious invitation and peremptory command to all, to hear him, and believe in him, Mat. iii. 17. 1 John iii. 23. Nay, if we speak more properly, our salvation is not the business of Christ alone, as we imagine it, but the whole Godhead is interested in it deeply, and so deeply, that you cannot say, who loves it most, or likes it most. The Father is the very fountain of it, his love is the spring of all—"God so loved the world, that he hath sent his Son." Christ hath not purchased that eternal love to us, but is rather the gift, the free gift of eternal love. And therefore, as we have the Son delighting among the sons of men, Prov.

viii. and delighting to be employed and to do his will, Psal. xl., so we have the Father delighting to send his Son, and taking pleasure in instructing him, and furnishing him for it, Isa. xlii. 1. And therefore Christ often professed that he was not about his own work, but the Father's work who sent him, and that it was not his own will, but his Father's, he was fulfilling. Therefore we should not look upon the head-spring of our salvation in the Son, but rather ascend up to the Father, whose love and wisdom did frame all this. And thus we may be confident to come to the Father in the Son, knowing that it was the love of the Father that sent the Son, though indeed we must come to him only in the Son, in the name of Christ, and faith of acceptation through a Mediator; not because the Mediator purchaseth his good will, but because his love and good will only vents in his beloved Son Christ, and therefore he will not be known or worshipped but in him, in whom he is near sinners, and reconciling the world to himself. And then the Holy Ghost concurs in this testimony; and as the Son had the work of purchasing rights and interests to grace and glory, so the great work of applying all these privileges to saints, and making them actually partakers of the blessings of Christ's death, is committed in a special way to the Holy Ghost—"I will send the Comforter," &c. So then Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all agree in one, that Jesus Christ is a sure refuge for sinners, a plank for ship-broken men, a firm and sure foundation to build everlasting hopes upon. There is no party dissenting in all the gospel. The business of the salvation of lost souls is concluded in his holy council of the Trinity with one voice, as at first, all of them agreed to make man,—"let us make man:" so again, they agree to make him again, to restore him to life in the second Adam. Whoever thou be that wouldst flee to God for mercy, do it in confidence. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are ready to welcome thee, all of one mind to shut out none, to cast out none. But to speak properly, it is but one love, one will, one council,

and purpose in the Father, Son, and Spirit, for these Three are One, and not only agree in One, they are One, and what one loves or purposes, all love and purpose. I would conclude this matter with a word of direction how to worship God, which I cannot express in fitter terms than those of Nazianzen. "I cannot think upon one, but by and by I am compassed about with the brightness of three, and I cannot distinguish three, but I am suddenly driven back unto one." There is great ignorance and mistake of this even amongst the best Christians. The grosser sort, when they hear of one God only, think Christ but some eminent man, and so direct their prayers to God only, excluding the Son and Holy Ghost; or when they hear of three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, they straightway divide their worship, and imagine a trinity of gods; and I fear, those of us who know most, use not to worship God as he hath revealed himself,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and yet one God. Our minds are reduced to such a simple unity, as we think upon one of them alone, or else distracted and divided into such a plurality, that we worship in a manner three gods instead of one. It is a great mystery to keep the right middle way. Learn, I beseech you, so to conceive of God, and so to acknowledge him, and pray to him, as you may do it in the name of Jesus Christ, that all the persons may have equal honour, and all of them one honour; that while you consider one God, you may adore that sacred and blessed Trinity; and while you worship that Holy Trinity, you may straightway be reduced to an unity. To this wonderful and holy One, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all praise and glory.

XIV.

THE DECREES OF GOD.

Eph. i. 11. latter part.—Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Job xxiii. 13.—He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

Having spoken something before of God, in his nature, and being, and properties, we come, in the next place, to consider his glorious Majesty, as he stands in some nearer relation to his creatures, the work of his hands. For we must conceive the first rise of all things in the world, to be in this self-being, the first conception of them to be in the womb of God's everlasting purpose and decree; which, in due time, according to his appointment, brings forth the child of the creature to the light of actual existence and being. It is certain, that his majesty might have endured for ever, and possessed himself without any of these things. If he had never resolved to create any thing without himself, he had been blessed then, as now, because of his full and absolute self-sufficient perfection. His purposing to make a world, and his doing of it, adds nothing to his inward blessedness and contentment. This glorious and holy One, encloses within his own being, all imaginable perfections, in an infinite and transcendent manner; that if you remove all created ones, you diminish nothing; if you add them all, you increase nothing. Therefore it was in the superabundance of his perfection, that he resolved to shew his glory thus in the world. It is the creature's indigence and limited condition, which maketh it needful to go without its own compass, for the happiness of its own being. Man cannot be happy in loving himself. He is not satisfied with his own intrinsic perfections, but he must diffuse himself by his affections, and desires, and endeavours, and, as it were, walks abroad upon these legs, to fetch in supply from the creature or Creator. The crea-

ture is constrained out of some necessity thus to go out of itself, which speaks much indigence and want within itself. But it is not so with his majesty. His own glorious Being contents him, his happiness is to know that, and delight in it, because it comprehends in itself all that is at all possible, in the most excellent and perfect manner that is conceivable; nay, infinitely beyond what can be conceived by any but himself. So he needs not go without himself to seek love or delight, for it is all within him, and it cannot be without his own Being, unless it flow from within him. Therefore ye may find in Scripture what complacency God hath in himself, and the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father. We find, Prov. viii., how the wisdom of God, our Lord Jesus, was the Father's delight from all eternity, and the Father again his delight, for he rejoiced always before him, ver. 30. And this was an all-sufficient possession that one had of another, ver. 22; the love between the Father and the Son is holden out as the first pattern of all loves and delights, John xvii. 23, 24. This then flows from the infinite excess of perfection and exundance of self-being, that his majesty is pleased to come without himself, to manifest his own glory in the works of his hands, to decree and appoint other things beside himself, and to execute that decree.

We may consider in these words some particulars for our edification.

I. That the Lord hath from eternity purposed within himself, and decreed to manifest his own glory in the making and ruling of the world; that there is a counsel and purpose of his will which reaches all things, which have been, are now, or are to be after this. This is clear, for he works all things "according to the counsel of his own will."

II. That his mind and purpose is one mind, one counsel. I mean not only one for ever, that is, perpetual and unchangeable, as the words speak, but also one for all;

that is, with one simple act or resolution of his holy will he hath determined all these several things, all their times, their conditions, their circumstances.

III. That whatsoever he hath from all eternity purposed, he in time practiseth it, and comes to execution and working; so that there is an exact correspondence betwixt his will and his work, his mind and his hand. He works according to the counsel of his will, and whatsoever his soul desireth that he doeth.

IV. That his purpose and performance is infallible,—irresistible by any created power. Himself will not change it, for he is in one mind; and none else can hinder it, for who can turn him? He desireth and he doeth it, as in the original. There is nothing intervenes between the desire and the doing, that can hinder the meeting of these two.

The *first* is the constant doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, of which ye should consider four things. 1. That his purpose and decree is most wise; therefore Paul cries out upon such a subject, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Rom. xi. 33. His will is always one with wisdom, therefore you have the purpose of his will mentioned thus, "the counsel of his will;" for his will, as it were, takes counsel and advice of wisdom, and discerns according to the depth and riches of his knowledge and understanding. We see among men these are separated often, and there is nothing in the world, so disorderly, so unruly and uncomely, as when will is divided from wisdom. When men follow their own will and lusts as a law, against their conscience, that is monstrous. The understanding and reason are the eyes of the will; if these be put out, or if a man leave them behind him, he cannot but fall into a pit. But the purposes of God's will are depths of wisdom, nay, his very will is a sufficient rule and law; so that it may be well used of him, *stat pro ratione voluntas,* Rom. ix. 13, 14. If we consider the glorious fabric of the world, the order established in it, the sweet harmony it keepeth in all its

motions and successions, O it must be a wise mind and counsel that contrived it. Man now having the idea of this world in his mind, might fancy and imagine many other worlds, bearing some proportion and resemblance to this. But if he had never seen nor known this world, he could never have imagined the thousandth part of this world; he could in noways have formed an image in his mind of all those different kinds of creatures. Creatures must have some example and copy to look to; but what was his pattern? Who hath been his counsellor to teach him? Rom. xi. 34. Who gave him the first rudiments or principles of that art? Surely none. He had no pattern given him, not the least idea of any of these things furnished him; but it is absolutely and solely his own wise contrivance. 2. This purpose of God is most free and absolute; there is no cause, no reason why he hath thus disposed all things, and not otherwise, as he might have done, but his own good will and pleasure. If it be so in a matter of deepest concernment, Rom. ix. 18, it must be so also in all other things. We may find, indeed, many inferior causes—many peculiar reasons for such and such a way of administration—many ends and uses for which they serve; for there is nothing that his majesty hath appointed, but it is for some use and reason. Yet we must rise above all these, and ascend into the tower of his most high will and pleasure, which is founded on a depth of wisdom; and from thence we shall behold all the order, administration, and use of the creatures to depend. And herein is a great difference between his majesty's purpose and ours. You know there is still something presented under the notion of good and convenient, that moves our will, and inclines us for its own goodness to seek after it, and so to fall upon the means to compass it. Therefore, the end which we propose to ourselves hath its influence upon our purposes, and pleasures them; so that from it the motion seems to proceed first, and not so much from within; but there is no created thing can thus determine his majesty. Himself, his

own glory, is the great end, which he loves for itself, and for which he loves other things. But among other things, though there be many of them ordained one for another's use, yet his will and pleasure is the original of that order. He doth not find it, but makes it. You see all the creatures below are appointed for man, as their immediate and next end, for his use and service. But was it man's goodness and perfection which did move and incline his majesty to this appointment? No, indeed, but of his own good will he makes such things serve man, that all of them together may be for his own glory. 3. The Lord's decree is the first rise of all things that are, or have been, or are to come. This is the first original of them all, to which they must be reduced as their spring and fountain. All of you may understand that there are many things possible, which yet actually will never be. The Lord's power and omnipotency is of a further extent than his decree and purpose. His power is natural and essential to his being; his decree is of choice, and voluntary. The Father could have sent a legion of angels to have delivered his Son; the Son could have asked them, but neither of them would do it, Mat. xxvi. 53. The Lord could have raised up children to Abraham out of stones, but he would not, Mat. iii. His power then comprehends within its reach all possible things which do not in their own nature, and proper conception, imply a contradiction, so that infinite worlds of creatures more perfect than this, numbers of angels and men above these, and creatures in glory surpassing them again, are within the compass of the boundless power and omnipotency of God. But yet for all this it might have fallen out, that nothing should actually and really have been, unless his majesty had of his own free will decreed what is, or hath been, or is to be. His will determines his power, and, as it were, puts it in the nearest capacity to act and exercise itself. Here then we must look for the first beginning of all things that are. They are conceived in the womb of the Lord's everlasting purpose, as he speaks, Zeph. ii. 2. The decree is, as it were,

with child of beings, Isa. xliv. 7. It is God's royal prerogative to appoint things to come, and none can share with him in it. From whence is it, I pray you, that of so many worlds which his power could have framed, this one is brought to light? Is it not because this one was formed, as it were, in the belly of his eternal counsel and will? From whence is it that so many men are, and no more?—That our Lord Jesus was slain, when the power of God might have kept him alive?—That those men, Judas, &c. were the doers of it, when others might have done it? From whence all those actions, good or evil, under the sun, which he might have prevented, but from his good will and pleasure, from his determinate counsel? Acts iv. 28. Can you find the original of these in the creature, why it is thus, and why not otherwise? Can you conceive why, of all the infinite numbers of possible beings, these are, and no other? And, what hath translated that number of creatures, which is, from the state of pure possibility to futurition or actual being, but the decisive vote of God's everlasting purpose and counsel? Therefore we should always conceive, that the creatures, and all their actions, which have, or will have any being in the world, have first had a being in the womb of God's eternal counsel, and that his will and pleasure hath passed upon all things that are, and are not. His counsel has concluded of things that have been, or will be, that thus they shall be; and his counsel has determined of all other things which are also possible, that they shall never come forth into the light of the world, but remain in the dark bowels of omnipotency, that so we may give him the glory of all things that are not, and that are at all. Then, 4. We should consider the extent of his decree and counsel; it is passed upon all things; it is universal, reaching every being or action of the universe. This is the strain of the whole Scripture. He did not, as some dream, once create the creatures in a good state, and put them in capacity henceforth to preserve themselves, or exercise their own virtue and power, without dependance on him,

as an artificer makes an horologe, and orders it in all things, that it may do its business without him. He is not only a general original of action and motion, as if he would command a river to flow by his appointed channels; as if he did only work, and rule the world by attorneys and ambassadors. That is the weakness and infirmity of earthly kings, that they must substitute deputies for themselves. But this king appoints all immediately, and disposes upon all the particular actions of his creatures, good or evil; and so he is universal absolute Lord of the creature—of its being and doing. It were a long work to rehearse what the Scripture speaks of this kind; but O! that ye would read them oftener, and ponder them better, how there is nothing in this world, (which may seem to fall out by chance to you; that you know not how it is come to pass, and can see no cause nor reason of it,) but it falls out by the holy will of our blessed Father. Be it of greater or less moment, or be it a hair of thy head fallen, or thy head cut off; the most casual and contingent thing, though it surprised the whole world of men and angels, that they should wonder from whence it did proceed, it is no surprisal to him, for he not only knew it, but appointed it. The most certain and necessary thing, according to the course of nature, it hath no certainty, but from his appointment, who hath established such a course in the creatures, and which he can suspend when he pleaseth. Be it the sin of men and devils, which seems most opposite to his holiness, yet even that cannot appear in the world of beings, if it were not, in a holy, righteous, and permissive way, first conceived in the womb of his eternal counsel, and if it were not determined by him, for holy and just ends, Acts iv. 28.

The *second* thing propounded is, that his mind and counsel is one; one and the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Therefore the apostle speaks of God, "That there is no shadow of change or turning in him," James i. 17. "He is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent: will he say, and not

do it?" Num. xxiii. 19. And shall he decree, and not execute it? Shall he purpose, and not perform it? "I am the Lord, I change not;" that is his name, Mal. iii. 6. The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations, Psal. xxxiii. 11. Men change their mind oftener than their garments; poor vain man, even in his best estate, is changeableness, and vicissitude itself, altogether vanity: And this ariseth, partly from the imperfection of his understanding, and his ignorance, because he does not understand what may fall out,—there are many things secret and hidden, which, if he discovered, he would not be of that judgment; and many things may fall out which may give ground of another resolution: And partly from the weakness and perverseness of his will, that cannot be constant in any good thing, and is not so closely united to it, as that no fear or terror can separate from it. But there is no such imperfection in him, neither ignorance nor weakness. "All things are naked before him;" all their natures, their circumstances, all events, all emergencies, "known to him are they, and all his works from the beginning," as perfectly as in the end. And therefore he may come to a fixed resolution from all eternity, and being resolved, he can see no reason of change, because there can nothing appear after, which he did not perfectly discover from the beginning. Therefore, whenever ye read in the Scripture of the Lord's repenting, as Gen. vi. 7. Jer. xvi 8, ye should remember that the Lord speaks in our terms, and like nurses with their children, uses our own dialect, to point out to us our great ignorance of his majesty, that cannot conceive more honourably of him, nor more distinctly of ourselves. When he changeth all things about him, he is not changed, for all these changes were at once in his mind; but when he changeth his outward dispensations, he is said to repent of what he is doing, because we use not to change our manner of dealing, without some conceived grief, or repentance, and change of mind. When a man goes to build a house, he hath no mind but that it should continue

so. He hath not the least thought of taking it down again, but afterwards it becomes ruinous, and his estate enlarges, and then he takes a new resolution, to cast it down to the ground, and build a better. Thus it is with man; according as he varies his work, he changes his mind. But it is not so with God. All these changes of his works, all the successions of times, the variation of dealings, the alteration of dispensations in all ages, were at once in his mind, and all before him; so that he never goes to build a house, but he hath in his own mind already determined all the changes it shall be subject to. When he sets up a throne in a nation, it is in his mind within such a period to cast it down again; when he lifts up men in success and prosperity, he doth not again change his mind when he throws them down, for that was in his mind also; so that there is no surprisal of him by any unexpected emergence. Poor man hath many consultations ere he come to a conclusion. But it is not thus with his counsel. Of all those strange and new things which fall out in our days, he hath one thought of them all from eternity. "He is one mind," and none of all these things have put him off his eternal mind, or put him to a new advisement about his great projects. Not only doth he not change his mind, but his mind and thought is one of all, and concerning all. Our poor, narrow, and limited minds, must part their thoughts among many businesses,—one thought for this, another for that, and one after another. But with him there is neither succession of counsels and purposes, nor yet plurality; but, as with one opening of his eye, he beholds all things as they are, so with one inclination, or nod of his will, he hath given a law, and appointed all things. If we can at one instant, and one look, see both light and colours, and both the glass and the shadow in it, and with one motion of our wills move towards the end and the means; O, how much more may he, with one simple undivided act of his good will and pleasure, pass a determination on all things, in their times, and orders, and in his own in-

finite and glorious Being perceive them all with one look! How much consolation might redound from this to believing souls! Hath the Lord appointed you to suffer persecution and tribulation here? Hath he carved out such a lot unto you in this life? Then withal consider, that his majesty hath eternal glory wrapt up in the same counsel, from which thy afflictions proceed. Hath he made thy soul to melt before him? Hath he convinced thee, and made thee to flee unto the city for refuge, and expect salvation from no other but himself? Then know, that life eternal is in the bosom of that same purpose which gave thee to believe this; though the one be born before the other, yet the decree shall certainly bring forth the other. And for such souls as upon this vain presumption of the infallibility of God's purposes, think it needless to give diligence in religion, know, that it is one mind and purpose that hath linked the end and the means together as a chain; and therefore, if thou expectest to be saved, according to election, thou must, according to the same counsel, make thy calling home from sin to God sure.

Thirdly, What thing soever he hath purposed, he in due time applies to the performance of it, and then the counsel of his will becomes the work of his hands, and there is an admirable harmony and exact agreement between these two. All things come out of the womb of his eternal decree, by the word of his power, even just fashioned and framed, as their lineaments and draughts were proportioned in the decree, nothing failing, nothing wanting, nothing exceeding. There is nothing in the idea of his mind but it is expressed in the work of his hands. There is no raw half wishes in God. Men have such imperfect desires,—I would have, or do, such a thing if it were not, &c. He wavers not thus in suspense, but what he wills and desires, he wills and desires indeed. He intends, doubtless, it shall be, and what he intends he will execute and bring to pass; therefore his will in due time applies almighty power to fulfil the desire of it; and

almighty power being put to work by his will, it cannot but work all things according to the counsel of his will; and whatsoever his soul desireth, that he cannot but do, even as he desires, seeing he can do it. If he will do it, and can do it, what hinders him to work and do? Know then that his commands and precepts to you, signifying what is your duty, they do not so much signify what he desires, or intends to work, or have done, as his approbation of such a thing in itself to be your duty; and therefore, though he have revealed his will concerning our duty, though no obedience follow, yet is not his intention frustrated or disappointed; for his commands to you say not what is his intention about it, but what is that which he approves as good, and a duty obliging men. But whatsoever thing he purposes and intends should be, certainly he will do it, and make it to be done. If it be a work of his own power alone, himself will do it alone. If he require the concurrence of creatures to it, as in all the works of providence, then he will effectually apply the creatures to his work, and not wait in suspense on their determination. If he have appointed such an end to be attained by such means; if he have a work to do by such instruments, then, without all doubt, he will apply the instruments when his time comes, and will not wait on their concurrence. You see now strange things done, you wonder at them:—How we are brought down from our excellency. How our land is laid desolate by strangers. How many instruments of the Lord's work are laid aside. How he lifts up a rod of indignation against us, and is like to overturn even the foundations of our land. All these were not in our mind before, but they were in his mind from eternity, and therefore he is now working it. Believe then that there is not a circumstance of all this business, not one point or jot of it, but is even as it was framed and carved out of old. His present works are according to an ancient pattern, which he carries in his mind. All the measures and degrees of your affliction, all the ounces and grain-weights of your cup, were all weighed in

the scales of his eternal counsel; the instruments, the time, the manner, all that is in it. If he change instruments, that was in his mind; if he change dispensations, that was in his mind also; and seeing ye know by the scriptures that a blessed end is appointed for the godly, that all things work for their good, that all is subservient to the church's welfare; seeing, I say, you know his purpose is such as the scripture speaks, then believe his performance shall be exact accordingly, nothing deficient; no joint, no sinew in all his work of providence, no line in all his book and volume of the creature, but it was written in that ancient book of his eternal counsel, and first fashioned in that, Psal. cxxxix. 16.

Then, *Lastly*. His will is irresistible, his counsel shall stand; who can turn him from his purpose, and who can hinder him from performance? Therefore he attains his end, in the highest and most superlative degree of certainty and infallibility. Himself will not change his own purpose; for why should he do it? If he change to the better, then it reflects on his wisdom; if he change to the worse, it reflects both on his wisdom and goodness. Certainly he can see no cause why he should change it. But as himself cannot change, so none can hinder his performance; for what power think you, shall it be, that may attempt that? Is it the power of men, of strong men, of high men, of any men? No sure, for their breath is in their nostrils, they have no power but as he breathes in them. If he keep in his breath, as it were, they perish. All nations are as nothing before him, and what power hath nothing? Is it devils may do it? No; for they cannot, though they would;—he chains them, he limits them. Is it good angels? They are powerful indeed, but they neither can, nor will resist his will. Let it be the whole university of the creation, suppose all their scattered force and virtue conjoined in one, yet it is all but finite, it amounts to no more, if you would eternally add unto it; but all victory and resistance of this kind must be by a superior power, or at least by an equal. Therefore we

may conclude that there is no impediment or let, that can be put in his way, nothing can obstruct his purpose; if all the world should conspire as one man to obstruct the performance of any of his promises and purposes, they do but rage in vain. Like dogs barking at the moon, they shall be so far from attaining their purpose, that his majesty shall disabuse them, so to speak, to his own purpose. He shall apply them quite contrary to their own mind, to work out the counsel of his mind? Here is the absolute King, only worth the name of a King and Lord, whom all things in heaven and earth obey at the first nod and beckoning to them. Hills, seas, mountains, rivers, sun and moon, and clouds, men and beasts, angels and devils, all of them are acted, moved, and inclined according to his pleasure; all of them are about his work indeed, as the result of all in the end shall make it appear, and are servants at his command, going where he bids go, and coming where he bids come, led by an invisible hand, though in the mean time they know it not, but think they are about their own business, applaud themselves for a time in it; *ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.* Godly men who know his will and love it, are led by it willingly, for they yield themselves up to his disposal; but wicked men, who have contrary wills of their own, can gain no more by resisting, but to be drawn along with it.

Now to what purpose is all this spoken of God's decrees and purposes, which he hath called a secret belonging to himself? If his works and judgments be a great depth, and unsearchable, sure his decrees are far more unsearchable; for it is the secret and hidden purpose of God, which is the very depth of his way and judgment. But to what purpose is it all, I say, not to inquire curiously into the particulars of them, but to profit by them? The Scripture holds out to us the unchangeableness, freedom, extent, holiness, and wisdom of them, for our advantage, and if this advantage be not reaped, we know them in vain. Not to burden your memory with many particulars, we should labour to draw forth both instruction and con-

solation out of them. Instruction, I say, in two things especially,—to submit with reverence and respect to his majesty in all his works and ways, and to trust in him who knows all his works, and will not change his mind.

There is nothing wherein I know Christians more deficient than in this point of submission, which I take to be one of the chiefest and sweetest, though hardest duties of a Christian. It is hardly to be found among men,—a thorough compliance of the soul to what his soul desires, a real subjection of our spirits to his good-will and pleasure. There is nothing so much blessed in Scripture, as waiting on him, as yielding to him to be disposed upon,—"Blessed are all they that wait on him." Pride is the greatest opposite, and he opposes himself most to that, for it is in its own nature most derogatory to the highness and majesty of God, which is his very glory. Therefore submission is most acceptable to him, when the soul yields itself and its will to him. He condescends far more to it; he cannot be an enemy to such a soul. Submission to his majesty's pleasure, is the very bowing down of the soul willingly to any thing he does or commands. Whatever yoke he puts on, of duty or suffering, to take it on willingly, without answering again, which is the great sin condemned in servants; to put the mouth in the dust, and to keep silence, because he doth it—"I was dumb with silence, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." There is submission indeed, silence of mind and mouth, a restraint put upon the spirit to think nothing grudgingly of him for any thing he doth. It is certainly the greatest fault of Christians, and ground of many more, that ye do not look to God, but to creatures in any thing that befalls you; therefore there are so frequent risings of spirits against his yoke, frequent spurnings against it, as Ephraim, unaccustomed with the yoke. So do ye; and this is it only makes it heavy and troublesome. If there were no more reason for it but your own gain, it is the only way to peace and quietness. *Durum sed levius fit patientia, quicquid corrigere est nefas.* Your impatience

cannot help you, but hurt you, it is the very yoke of your yoke; but quiet and silent stooping makes it easy in itself, and brings in more help beside, even divine help. Learn this, I beseech you, to get your own wills abandoned, and your spirits subdued to God, both in the point of duty and dispensation. If duties commanded cross thy spirit, as certainly the reality and exercise of godliness must be unpleasant to any nature, know what thou art called to, to quiet thy own will to him, to give up thyself to his pleasure singly, without so much respect to thy own pleasure or gain. Learn to obey him simply because he commands, though no profit redound to thee, and by this means thou shalt in due time have more sweet peace and real gain, though thou intendedst it not. And in case any dispensation cross thy mind, let not thy mind rise up against it. Do not fall out with Providence, but commit thy way wholly to him, and let him do what he pleases in that. Be thou minding thy duty. Be not anxious in that, but be diligent in this, and thou shalt be the only gainer by it; besides, the honour redounds to him.

Then I would exhort you, from this ground, to trust in him. Seeing he alone is the absolute Sovereign Lord of all things, seeing he has passed a determination upon all things, and accordingly they must be, and seeing none can turn him from his way, O then, Christians, learn to commit yourselves to him in all things, both for this life and the life to come! Why are ye so vain and foolish, as to depend and hang upon poor, vain, depending creatures? Why do ye not forsake yourselves? Why do ye not forsake all other things as empty shadows? Are not all created powers, habits, gifts, graces, strength, riches, &c. like the idols in comparison of him, who can neither do good, neither can they do ill? Cursed is he that trusts in man, Jer. xvii. 5, 6. There needs no other curse than the very disappointment you shall meet withal. Consider, I beseech you, that our God can do all things, whatever he pleases, in heaven and earth, and that none can obstruct his pleasure. Blessed is that soul for whom the counsel

of his will is engaged, and it is engaged for all that trust in him. He can accomplish his good pleasure in thy behalf, either without or against means; all impediments and thorns set in his way, he can burn them up. You who are heirs of the promises, O know your privilege! What his soul desireth, he doth even that; and what he hath seriously promised to you, he desires. If you ask, who are heirs of the promises? I would answer, simply those, and those only, who do own them and challenge them, and cling to them for their life and salvation; those who seek the inheritance only by the promise, and whose soul desires them and embraces them. O if you would observe how unlike ye are to God! Ye change often, ye turn often out of the way; but that were not so ill if ye did not imagine him to be like yourselves, and it is unbelief which makes him like to yourselves, when your frame and tender disposition changes, when presence and access to God is removed. That is wrong, it speaks out a mortal creature indeed; but if it be so, O do no more wrong! Do not, by your suspicions and jealousies, and questionings of him, imagine that he is like unto you, and changed also. That is a double wrong and dishonour to his majesty. Hath he not said, "I am God, and change not:" he is in one mind, who can turn him? How comes it then, that ye doubt of his love as oft as ye change? When ye are in a good temper, ye think he loves you; when it is not so, ye cannot believe but he is angry, and hates you. Is not this to speak quite contrary to the word; that he is a God that changes, that he is not in one mind, but now in one, and then in another, as oft as the inconstant wind of a soul's self-pleasing humour turns about? Here is your rest and confidence, if you will be established, not within yourselves, not upon marks and signs within you, which ebb and flow as the sea, and change as the moon, but, upon his unchangeable nature and faithful promises. This we desire to hold out to you all, as one ground for all. You would every one have some particular ground in your own disposition and condition, and think it gene-

ral doctrine only which layeth it not home so; but believe it, I know no ground of real soul-establishment, but general truths and principles common to you all; and our business is not to lay any other foundation, or more foundations, according to your different conditions, but to lay this one foundation, Christ and God unchangeable, and to exhort every one of you to make that general foundation your own in particular, by leaning to it, and building upon it, and clinging to it. All other are sandy and ruinous.

Let us now, in this sad time, press consolation from this. "The Lord's hand is in all this." It is immediate in every dispensation, and it is only carnal-mindedness that cannot see him stretching out his hand to every man, with his own portion of affliction. Know this one thing, that God is in one mind; for all these many ways and judgments, he is in one mind,—to gather the saints, to build up the Church, the body of Christ. This is his end,—all other businesses are in the by, and subservient to this; therefore he will change it as he pleases, but his great purpose of good to his people all the world cannot hinder. Let us then establish our souls in this consideration; all is clear above, albeit cloudy below; all is calm in heaven, albeit tempestuous here upon earth. There is no confusion, no disorder in his mind. Though we think the world out of course, and that all things reel about with confusion, he hath one mind in it, and who can turn him? And that mind is good to them that trust in him; and therefore, who can turn away our good? Let men consult and imagine what they please, let them pass votes and decrees what to do with his people, yet it is all to no purpose, for there is a counsel above, an older counsel, which must stand and take place in all generations. If men's conclusions be not according to the counsel of his will, they are but imaginary dreams, like the fancies of a distracted person, who imagining himself a king, sits down on the throne, and gives out decrees and ordinances. May not he who sits in heaven laugh at the foolishness and madness of men, who act in all things as if they had no dependence on him, and go

about their business, as if it were not contrived already? It is a ridiculous thing for men to order their business, and settle their own conclusions, without once minding One above them, who hath not only a negative, but an affirmative vote in all things. It is true that God, in his deep wisdom, hath kept up his particular purposes secret, that men may walk according to an appointed rule, and use all means for compassing their intended ends; and therefore it is well said, *Prudens futuri temporis exitum, caliginosa nocte premit Deus.* But yet withal we should mind that of James, "if the Lord will," and go about all things, even the most probable, with submission to his will and pleasure. And therefore, when men go without their bounds, either in fear of danger, or joy conceived in successes,—*ridetque si mortalis ultra fas trepidet,* &c.—excess of fear, excess of hope, excess of joy in these outward things, is, as it were, ridiculous to him, who hath all these things appointed with him. To him be praise and glory.

XV.

GOD HATH MADE ALL THINGS FOR HIS OWN GLORY.

Eph. i. 11.—In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, &c. Rom. ix. 22, 23.—What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, &c.

In the creation of the world, it pleased the Lord, after all things were framed and disposed, to make one creature to rule over all; and to him he gave the most excellent nature, and privileges beyond the rest; so that it may appear that he had made all things for man, and man immediately for his own glory. As man was the chief of the works of his hands, so we may, according to the Scriptures, conceive that he was chiefly minded in the counsels of his heart. And that, as in the execution of his purpose in creating the world, man had the pre-emi-

nence assigned unto him, and all seemed subordinate unto him; so, in the Lord's purposes concerning the world, his purpose about man has the pre-eminence. He, indeed, has resolved to declare the glory of his name in this world; therefore the heavens and firmament are made preachers of that glory, Psal. xix. 1, 2, &c. But in a special manner, his majesty's glorious name is manifested in man, and about man. He hath set man, as it were, in the centre or midst of the creation, that all the creatures might direct or bring in their praises unto him, to be offered up in his and their name, to the Lord their Maker, by him, as the common mouth of the world; and the Lord hath chosen this creature above all the creatures, for the more solemn and glorious declaration of himself in his special properties. Therefore, we should gather our thoughts in this business, to hear from the Lord what his thoughts are towards us; for, certainly, the right understanding of his everlasting counsel, touching the eternal state of man, is of singular virtue to conform us to the praise of his name, and establish us in faith and confidence. Predestination is a mystery, indeed, into which we should not curiously and boldly inquire beyond what is revealed; for then a soul must needs lose itself in that depth of wisdom, and perish in the search of unsearchableness. And thus the word speaks in Scripture of this subject, intimating to us, that it is rather to be admired than conceived; and that there ought to be some ignorance of these secrets, which, conjoined with faith and reverence, is more learned than any curious knowledge. But withal, we must open our eyes upon so much light as God reveals of these secrets, knowing that the light of the word is a saving refreshing light, not confounding, as is his inaccessible light of secret glory. As far as it pleaseth his majesty to open his mouth, let us not close our ears, but open them also to his instruction, knowing, that as he will withhold no necessary thing for our salvation, so he will reveal nothing but what is profitable. This is the best bond of sobriety and humble wisdom, to

learn what he teacheth us; but when he makes an end of teaching, to desire no more learning. It is humility to seek no more, and it is true wisdom to be content with no less.

There is much weakness in our conceiving of divine things. We shape and form them in our minds according to a mould of our own experience or invention, and cannot conceive of them as they are in themselves. If we should speak properly, there are not counsels and purposes in God, but one entire counsel and resolution concerning all things which are in time, by which he hath disposed all in their several times, seasons, conditions, and orders. But because we have many thoughts, about many things, so we cannot well conceive of God but in likeness to ourselves; and therefore, the Scripture, condescending to our weakness, speaks so.—"How many are thy precious thoughts towards me," saith David; and yet, indeed, there is but one thought of him, and us, and all, which one thought is of so much virtue, that it is equivalent to an infinite number of thoughts, concerning infinite objects. The Lord hath from everlasting conceived one purpose of manifesting his own glory in such several ways; and this is the head-spring of all that befalls creatures, men and angels. But because, in the execution of this purpose, there is a certain order, and succession, and variety, therefore men do ordinarily fancy such or such a frame and order in the Lord's mind and purpose. And as the astronomers do cut and carve in their imagination, cycles, orbs, and epicycles in the heavens, because of the various and different appearances and motions of stars in them, whereas it may be, really, there is but one celestial body, in which all these various lights and motions do appear; so do men fancy unto themselves an order in the Lord's decree, according to the phenomena or appearances of his works in the world; whereas, it is one purpose and decree, which in its infinite compass comprehends all these varieties and orders together. This much, we may indeed lawfully conceive of his decree,

that there is an exact correspondence and suitableness between his majesty's purpose and execution; and that he is a wise Lord, "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," having some great plot and design before his eyes, which he intends to effect, and which is, as it were, the great light and sun of this firmament, unto which, by that same wonderful counsel, all other things are subordinate; and so in the working it shall appear exactly as his counsel did delineate and contrive it.

There is no man so empty or shallow, but he hath some great design and purpose which he chiefly aims at; shall we not then conceive, that the Lord, who instructs every man to this discretion, and teaches him, Isa. xxviii. 26, is himself wise in his counsel, and hath some grand project before him in all this fabric of the world, and the upholding of it since it was made? Certainly he hath; and if you ask what it is, the wise man will teach you in general—"He made all things for himself, even the wicked for the evil day," Prov. xvi. 4. Here then is his great design and purpose,—to glorify himself, to manifest his own name to men and angels. Now, his name comprehends wisdom, goodness, power, mercy, and justice. The first three he declares in all the works of his hands. All are well done and wisely done. The excellency of the work shews the wonderful counsellor, and the wise contriver. The goodness of any creature in its kind, declares the inexhausted spring of a self-being from whom it proceeds; and the bringing all these out of nothing, and upholding them, is a glorious declaration of his power. But yet, in all the works of his hands, there is nothing found to manifest his glorious mercy and justice, upon which are the flower and garland of his attributes, and unto which wisdom and power seem to be subservient. Therefore his majesty, in that one entire purpose of his own glory, resolves to manifest his wrath and his mercy upon men and angels, subjects capable of it; which two attributes are as the poles about which all the wheels of election and reprobation turn, as you see in the

place, Rom. ix. 22, 23. Let this then be established as the end of all his works, as it is designed in his counsel, and nothing else. It is not the creature, nor any thing in the creature, which is first in his mind, but himself, and therefore, "of him, and for him are all things." Here they have their rise, and thither they return, even to the ocean of God's eternal glory, from whence all did spring.

The right establishing of this will help us to conceive aright of his counsel of predestination. It is a common cavil of carnal reason, how can the Lord reject so many persons, and fore-ordain them to destruction? It seems most contrary to his goodness and wisdom, to have such an end of eternal predestination before him, in the creating of so many thousands, to make men for nothing but to damn them. Here carnal reason, which is enmity to God, triumphs; but consider, I say, that this is not the Lord's end and chief design to destroy men: Even as it is not his majesty's first look, or furthest reach, to give unto others eternal life; so it is not his prime intent to sink them into eternal death, as if that were his pleasure and delight. No, indeed, neither is the creature's happiness or its misery that which first moves him, or is most desired of him, but himself only, and he cannot move out of himself to any business, but he must return it unto himself. Therefore the wise preacher expresses it well, "he made all for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil." It was not his great end of creating wicked men to damn them, or creating righteous men to save them, but both are for a further and higher end,—for himself and his own glory.

All seem to agree about this, that the great end of all the Lord's counsel and decrees, is his own glory, to be manifested on men and angels; and that this must be first in his mind; not that there is first or last with him, but to speak after the manner of men. If he had many thoughts, as we have, this would be his first thought, and in this one purpose this end is chiefly aimed at, and all other things are by the Lord's counsel subordinate to this,

as means to compass that. But as concerning the order of these means, and consequently of his majesty's purpose about them, men, by examining his majesty according to the creature's rules, or according to sense, bring him down far below his own infinite greatness. Some conceive that that was first, as it were, in his mind which is first done. Looking upon the execution of his purpose in the works of his power, they imagine, that as he first created man righteous, so this was his first thought concerning man, to create man for the glory of his goodness and power, without any particular determination as yet of his end. And I conceive, this is the thought of the multitude of people. They think God was disappointed in work when they hear he created such a glorious creature, that is now become so miserable. They cannot believe that his majesty had all this sin and misery determined with him when he purposed to create him, but look upon the emergence of man's fall into sin and misery as a surprisal of his majesty; as if he had meant another thing in creating him, and so was, upon this occasion of man's sin, driven to a new consultation about the helping of the business, and making the best out of it that might be. Thus through wisdom the world knows not God. They think God altogether like themselves, and so liken him to the builder of an house, who set nothing before him in doing so, but to build it after that manner for his own ends, but then being surprised with the fall and ruin of it, takes a new advisement, and builds it up again upon another and surer foundation. But because they cannot say, that God takes any new advisements in time, but must confess that all his counsels are everlasting concerning all the works of his hands; therefore they bring in fore-knowledge to smooth their irreligious conceit of God, as if the Lord, upon his purpose of creating man, had foreseen what should befall him, and so purposed to permit it to be so, that out of it he might erect some glorious fabric of mercy and justice upon the ruins of man. And that little or nothing may be left to the absolute sovereign will of God, to which

the Scripture ascribes all things, they must again imagine, that upon his purpose of sending Christ to save sinners, he is yet undetermined about the particular end of particular men, but watches on the tower of fore-knowledge to espy what they will do, whether men will believe in his Son or not, whether they will persevere in faith or not; and according to his observation of their doings, so he applies his own will to carve out their reward or portion of life or death. These are even the thoughts which are inbred in your breasts by nature. That which the learned call Arminianism, is nothing else but the carnal reason of men's hearts, which is enmity to God. It is that very disputation which Paul in this chapter, exclaims against, "Who art thou, O man, that disputest?"

But certainly, all this contrivance is nothing beseeming the wisdom or sovereignty of God, but reflects upon both; upon his wisdom, that he should have thoughts of creating the most noble of his creatures, and yet be in suspense about the end of the creature, and have that in uncertainty what way his glory shall indeed be manifested by it. Is it not the first and chief thought of every wise man, what he intends and aims at in his work, and according to the measure and reach of his wisdom, so he reaches further in his end and purpose? Shall we then conceive the only wise God so far to have mistaken himself, as to do that which no wise man would do? He who is of such an infinite reach of wisdom and understanding, to fall upon the thoughts of making such an excellent creature, and yet to lie in suspense within himself about the eternal estate of it, and to be in a waiting posture what way his glory should be manifested by it; whether in a way of simple goodness only, or in a way of justice, or in a way of mercy, till he should foresee, off the tower of fore-knowledge, how that creature should behave itself. Our text speaks not thus; for in the place, Eph. i., we have the Lord, in his eternal purpose, carving out to such and such particular persons an inheritance, and adoption of children, for that great end of the glory of his grace, ver.

11, and 5, 6. And predestination falls out, not according to our carriage, but according to the purpose of him who "works all things" that he works, "after the counsel of his own will," without consulting our will; and if you inquire what are these "all things," certainly we must take it simply for all things that are at all, or have any real being: his power, his hand must be in it, and that according to his own counsel, without respect had to the creature's will, according to his own good pleasure, ver. 5, 11. He had no sooner a thought of working and making man, but his purpose was in it, to make such men to the praise of his glorious grace, and to fore-ordain them to an inheritance, and others to make or fit them for destruction, as the text, Rom. ix. 22, bears. Herein the great and unsearchable wisdom of God appears to be a great depth, that when he hath a thought of making such a vessel, he hath this purpose in the bosom of it, what use it shall be for, whether for honour or dishonour, and accordingly in his counsel he prepares it either to glory or destruction, and in time makes it fit for its use, either by sin or grace. Here is the depth that cannot be sounded by mortal men. "O the depth of the riches both of his wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" The whole tenor of the Scripture shews that his majesty was not surprised and taken at unawares by Adam's fall, but that it fell out according to the determined counsel of his will. If he knew it, and suffered it to be, certainly he permitted it, because he willed it should be so; and why may he not determine that in his holy counsel, which his wisdom can disabuse to the most glorious end that can be? Why may not he decree such a fall, who out of man's ruins can erect such a glorious throne for his grace and justice to triumph into? It is more for the glory of his infinite wisdom, to bring good, and such a good out of evil, than only to permit that good should be.

Then such doctrine is repugnant to the Lord's absolute power and sovereignty, which is Paul's sanctuary, whither

he flies unto as a sure refuge, from the stroke or blast of carnal reason. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make of the same lump, one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?" ver. 21. Hath not the Lord more absolute dominion over us, than the potter hath over the clay, for the potter made not the clay, but the Lord hath made us of nothing? so that simply and absolutely we are his, and not our own, and so he hath an absolute right to make any use of us he pleases, without consulting our wills and deservings. Can any man quarrel him for preparing him to destruction, seeing he owes nothing to any man, but may do with his own what he pleases? What if God, willing to make known his power, and justice, and wrath, have fitted and prepared some vessels for destruction, with which in time he bears much, and forbears long, using much patience towards them? Can any man challenge him for it? ver. 22. And what if God, willing to make known the riches of his grace, have prepared some vessels to glory, shall any man's eye be evil because he is good? ver. 23. Shall man be left to be his own disposer, and the shaper of his own fortune? Sure it was not so with Esau and Jacob,—they were alike in the womb. If there was any prerogative, Esau the eldest had it,—they had done neither good nor evil. What difference then was between them to cast the balance of his will? Can you imagine any? Indeed carnal reason will say, that God foreknew what they would do, and so he chose or rejected them. But, why doth not the apostle answer thus unto that objection of unrighteousness in God? ver. 14; it had been ready and plain; but rather he opposes the will and calling of God, to all works past or to come. He gives no answer but this, "he will have mercy because he will have mercy;" that is the supreme rule of righteousness, and hitherto must we flee, as the surest anchor of our hope and stability. Our salvation depends not on our willing or running, on our resolving or doing, but upon this primitive good pleasure and will of God, on which hangs our willing, and running, and obtaining. It is certainly a disorderly order, to flee unto that in men, for the

cause of God's eternal counsels, which only flows from his eternal counsel, Eph. i. 4. Hath he chosen us because he did foreknow that we would be holy, and without blame, as men think; or hath he not rather chosen us to be holy and without blame? He cannot behold any good or evil in the creatures, till his will pass a sentence upon it; for from whence should it come?

Seeing then this order and contrivance of God's purpose is but feigned, it seems to some that the very contrary method were more suitable, even to the rules of wisdom. You know what is first in men's intention, is last in execution. The end is first in their mind, then the means to compass that end. But in practice again, men fall first upon the means, and by them come at length to attain their end; therefore those who would have that first, as it were, in God's mind, which he doth first, do even cross common rules of reason in human affairs. It would seem then, say some, that this method might do well, that what is last in his execution, was first in his purpose, and by him intended as the end of what he doth first, and so some do rank his decrees; that he had first a thought of glorifying man, and to attain this end he purposed to give him grace, and for this purpose to suffer him to fall, and for all to create him. But we must not look thus upon it either. It were a foolish and ridiculous counsel, unbeseeming the poor wisdom of man, to purpose the glorifying of man whom he had not yet determined to create. Therefore we should always have it in our mind, that the great end and project of all is the glory of his mercy and justice upon men; and this we may conceive is first in order, neither men's life nor death, but God's glory to be manifested upon men. Now, to attain this glorious end, with one inclination or determination of his will, not to be distinguished or severed, he condescends upon all that is done in time, as one complete and entire mean of glorifying himself, so that one of them is not before another in his mind, but altogether. For attaining this, he purposes to create man. He ordains the fall of all men into

a state of sin and misery; and some of those, upon whom he had resolved to shew his mercy, he gives them to Christ to be redeemed, and restored by grace; others, he fore-ordains them to destruction; and all this at once, without any such order as we imagine. Now though he intend all this at once and together, yet it doth not hence follow that all these must be executed together. As when a man intends to build a house for his own accommodation, there are not many things in the house upon which he hath not several purposes; but yet they must be severally, and in some order done: first the foundation laid, then the walls raised, then the roof put on; yet he did not intend the foundation to be for the walls, or the walls for the roof, but all together for himself. Even so the Lord purposes to glorify his mercy and justice upon a certain number of persons, and for this end to give them a being, to govern their falling into misery, to raise some out of it by a Mediator, and to leave some into it to destruction; and all this as one entire mean to illustrate his glorious mercy and justice. But these things themselves must be done not all at once, but one before another, either as their own nature requires, or as he pleases. The very nature of the thing requires that man be created before he sin, that he sin and fall before a Mediator suffer for his sin, and that he have a being before he have a glorious being, and that he have a sinful and miserable being, before he have this glorious and gracious being, which may manifest the grace and mercy of God. But it is the pleasure of the Lord that determines in what time and order Christ shall suffer, either before or after the conversion of sinners, or whether sinners shall be presently instated in glory, and perfectly delivered from all sin at their first conversion, or only in part during this life.

Seeing then this was his majesty's purpose, to make so many vessels of honour, upon whom he might glorify the riches of his grace and mercy; and so many vessels of wrath, upon whom he might shew the power of his anger; you may think what needed all this business of man's re-

demption. Might not God have either preserved so many as he had appointed to glory from falling into sin and misery; or at least have freely pardoned their sin without any satisfaction; and out of the exceeding riches of his mercy and power, have as well not imputed sin to them at all, as imputed their sins to Christ, who was not guilty? What needed his giving so many to the Son, and the Son's receiving them? What needed these mysteries of incarnation, of redemption, seeing he might have done all this simply without so much pains and expense? Why did he choose this way? Indeed, that is the wonder; and if there were no more end for it, but to confound mortality that dare ask him what he doth, it is enough. Should he be called down to the bar of human reason, to give an account of his matters: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?" That is in the depths of his unsearchable understanding, that he chose to go this round, and to compass his end by such a strange circuit of means, when he might have done it simply and directly without so much pains. Yet it is not so hidden, but he hath revealed as much as may satisfy or silence all flesh. For we must consider, that his great project is not simply to manifest the glory of his goodness, but of his gracious and merciful goodness, the most tender and excellent of all; and therefore man must be miserable, sinful, and vile, that the riches of his grace may appear in choosing and saving such persons. But that it may appear also how excellent he could make man, and how vain all created perfections are, being left to themselves; therefore he first made man righteous, and being fallen into sin and misery, he might straightway have restored him without much ado. But his purpose was to give an exact demonstration of mercy, tempered and mixed with justice; and therefore he finds out the satisfaction in his eternal counsel, "I have found a ransom," and so he chooses Jesus Christ to be the head of these chosen souls, in whom they might be again restored unto eternal life. And these souls, he, in his everlasting purpose,

gives over to the Son to be redeemed, and these the Son receives. And thus the glory of mercy and justice shines most brightly, yea, more brightly, than if he had at first pardoned. O how doth his love and mercy appear, that he will transfer our sins upon his holy Son, and accept that redemption for us: and his justice, that a redemption price he must have, even from his Son, when once he comes in the stead of sinners! And in this point do the songs of eternity concentre.

XVI.

GOD HATH MADE ALL THINGS FOR HIS OWN GLORY.

Rom. ix. 22.—What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction. Eph. i. 11.—In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

We are now upon a high subject; high indeed for an eminent apostle, much more above our reach. The very consideration of God's infinite wisdom might alone suffice to restrain our limited thoughts, and serve to sober our minds with the challenge of our own ignorance and darkness; yet the vain and wicked mind of man will needs quarrel with God, and enter the lists of disputation with him, about his righteousness and wisdom in the counsel of election and reprobation: "But who art thou, O man, that repliest against God, or disputest?" ver. 20. This is a thing not to be disputed, but believed; and if ye will believe no more than ye can comprehend by sense or reason, then ye give his majesty no more credit than to weak mortal man. Whatever secret thoughts do rise up in thy heart when thou hearest of God's fore-ordaining men to eternal life, without previous foresight or consideration of their doings, and preparing men to eternal wrath, for the

praise of his justice, without previous consideration of their deservings, and passing a definitive sentence upon the end of all men, before they do either good or evil; whenever any secret surmises rise in thy heart against this, learn to answer thus; enter not the lists of disputation with corrupt reason, but put in this bridle of the fear of God's greatness, and the consciousness of thy own baseness, and labour to restrain thy undaunted and wild mind by it. Ponder that well, who thou art who disputest; who God is, against whom thou disputest; and if thou have spoken once, thou wilt speak no more. What thou art, who is as clay, formed out of nothing; what he is, who is the former; and hath not the potter power over the clay? Consider but how great wickedness it is, so much as to question him, or ask an account of his matters. After you have found his will to be the cause of all things, then to inquire farther into a cause of his will, which is alone the self-rule of righteousness, is to seek something above his will; and to reduce his majesty into the order of creatures. It is most abominable usurpation and sacrilege, for it both robs him of his royal prerogative, and instates the base footstool into his throne; but know, that certainly God will overcome when he is judged, Psal. li. 6. If thou judge him, he will condemn thee; if thou oppugn his absolute and holy decrees, he will hold thee fast bound by them to thy condemnation; he needs no other defence, but to call out thy own conscience against thee, and bind thee over to destruction. Therefore, as one saith well, "Let the rashness of men be restrained from seeking that which is not, lest peradventure they find that which is." Seek not a reason of his purposes, lest peradventure thou find thy own death and damnation infolded in them.

Paul mentions two objections of carnal and fleshly wisdom against this doctrine of election and reprobation, which indeed contain the sum of all that is vented and invented even to this day, to defile the spotless truth of God. All the whisperings of men tend to one of these two,—

either to justify themselves, or to accuse God of unrighteousness; and shall any do it and be guiltless? I confess, some oppose this doctrine, not so much out of an intention of accusing God, as out of a preposterous and ignorant zeal for God; even as Job's friends did speak much for God. Nay, but it was not well spoken, they did but speak wickedly for him. Some speak much to the defence of his righteousness and holiness, and under pretence of that plea make it inconsistent with these, to fore-ordain to life or death without the foresight of their carriage; but shall they speak wickedly of God, or will he accept their person? He who looks into the secrets of the heart, knows the rise and bottom of such defences and apologies for his holiness to be partly self-love, partly narrow and limited thoughts of him, drawing him down to the determinations of his own greatest enemy, carnal reason. Since men will ascribe to him no righteousness, but such a one of their own shaping, conformed to their own model, do they not indeed rob him of his holiness and righteousness?

I find two or three objections which may be reduced to this head. First, it seems unrighteousness with God, to predestinate men to eternal death, without their own evil deserving, or any forethought of it,—that before any man had a being, God should have been in his counsel, fitting so many to destruction. Is it not a strange mocking of the creatures, to punish them for that sin and corruption, unto which by his eternal counsel they were fore-ordained? This is even that which Paul objects to himself, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" Is it not unrighteousness to hate Esau before he deserves it? Is he not unrighteous, to adjudge him to death before he do evil? ver. 14; let Paul answer for us, "God forbid!" Why, there needs no more answer, but all thoughts or words which may in the least reflect upon his holiness, are abomination. Though we could not tell how it is righteous and holy with him to do it, yet this we must hold, that it is. It is his own property to comprehend the reason of his counsels; it is

our duty to believe what he reveals of them, without farther inquiry. He tells us, that thus it is clearly in this chapter; this far then we must believe. He tells us not how it is; then farther we should not desire to learn. God, in keeping silence of that, may put us to silence, and make us conceive that there is a depth to be admired, not sounded. Yet he goeth a little farther, and indeed as high as can be, to God's will—"He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth." Now, farther he cannot go, for there is nothing above this. We may descend from this, but we cannot ascend, or rise above it. But is this any answer to the argument? A sophister could press it further, and take advantage from that very ground—What! is not this to establish a mere tyranny in the Lord, that he doeth all things of mere will and pleasure, distributes rewards and punishments without previous consideration of men's carriage? But here we must stand, and go no farther than the Scriptures walk with us. Whatever reasons or causes may be assigned, yet certainly we must at length come up hither. All things are, because he so willed; and why willed we should not ask a reason, because his will is supreme reason, and the very self-rule of all righteousness. Therefore if we once know his will, we should presently conclude that it is most righteous and holy. If that evasion of the foreknowledge of men's sins and impenitency have been found solid, certainly Paul would have answered so, and not have had his refuge to the absolute will and pleasure of God, which seems to perplex it more. But he knew well, that there could nothing of that kind, whether good or evil, either actually be without his will, or be to come without the determination of the same will, and so could not be foreseen without the counsel of his will upon it; and therefore it had been but a poor shift to have refuge to that starting-hole of fore-knowledge, out of which he must presently flee to the will and pleasure of God, and so he betakes him straightway to that he must hold at, and opposes that will to man's doings. "It is not of him that

willeth," &c. If he had meant only that Jacob and Esau had actually done neither good nor evil, he needed not return to the sanctuary of God's will, for still it might be said, it is of him that runs and wills, and not of God's will, as the first original; because their good and evil foreseen did move him to such love and hatred. It is all alike of works and of men, whether these works be present or to come: therefore I would advise every one of you, whatever ye conceive of his judgment or mercy, if he have shewed mercy to you, O then rest not in thyself, but arise and ascend till thou come to the height of his eternal free purpose! and if thou conceive thy sin, and misery, and judgment, thou mayest go up also to his holy counsels, for the glory of his name, and silence thyself with them. But it shall be most expedient for thee in the thought of thy miseries, to return always within, and search the corruption of thy nature, which may alone make thee hateful enough to God. If thou search thy own conscience, it will stop thy mouth, and make thee guilty before God. Let not the thought of his eternal counsels diminish the conviction of thy guilt, or the hatred of thyself for sin and corruption; but dwell more constantly upon this, because thou art called and commanded so to do. One thing remains fixed,—though he hath fore-ordained man to death, yet none shall be damned till his conscience be forced to say, that he is worthy of it a thousand times.

There is another whispering and suggestion of the wicked hearts of men against the predestination of God, which insinuates that God is an accepter of persons, and so accuses him of partial unrighteous dealing, because he deals not equally with all men. Do ye not say this within yourselves—If he find all guilty, why does he not punish all? Why does he spare some? And if ye look upon all men in his first and primitive thought of them, as neither doing good nor evil, why does he not have mercy on all? But "is thine eye evil because he is good?" May he not do with his own as he pleases? Because he is merciful to some souls, shall men be dis-

pleased, and do well to be angry? Or, because he, of his own free grace, extends it, shall he be bound by a rule to do so with all? Is not he both just and merciful, and is it not meet that both be shewed forth? If he punish thee, thou canst not complain, for thou deservest it: if he shew mercy, why should any quarrel, for it is free and undeserved grace. By saving some, he shows his grace; by destroying others, he shows what all deserve. God is so far from being an accepter of persons according to their qualifications and conditions, that he finds nothing in any creature to cast the balance of his choice. If he did choose men for their works' sake, or outward privileges, and refuse others for the want of these, then it might be charged on him; but he rather goes over all these, nay, he finds none of these. In his first view of men he beholds them all alike, and nothing to determine his mind to one more than another, so that his choice proceedeth wholly from within his own breast—"I will have mercy on whom I will."

But then, *thirdly*, Our hearts object against the righteousness of God; that this fatal chain of predestination overturns all exhortations and persuasions to godliness, all care and diligence in well-doing. For thus do many profane souls conceive—If he be in one mind, who can turn him? Then, what need I pray, since he has already determined what shall be, and what shall become of me? His purpose will take effect whether I pray or not; my prayer will not make him change his mind; and if it be in his mind he will do it; if he hath appointed to save us, saved we shall be, live as we list; if he hath appointed us to death, die we must, live as we can. Therefore men, in this desperate estate, throw themselves headlong into all manner of iniquity, and that with quietness and peace. Thus do many souls perish upon the stumbling-stone laid in Zion, and wrest the truths and counsels of God to their own destruction, even quite contrary to their true intent and meaning. Paul, (Eph. i. 4.) speaks another language—"He hath chosen us in him, that

we should be holy and without blame." His eternal counsel of life is so far from loosing the reins to men's lusts, that it is the only certain foundation of holiness; it is the very spring and fountain from whence our sanctification flows by an infallible course. This chain of God's counsels concerning us, hath also linked together the end and the means, glory and grace, happiness and holiness, that there is no destroying of them. "Without holiness it is impossible to see God;" so that those who expect the one without any desire of, and endeavour after the other, they are upon a vain attempt to loose the links of this eternal chain, Rom. viii. It is the only eternal choosing love of God, which separated so many souls from the common misery of men. It is that only which in time doth appear, and rise as it were from under ground, in the streams or fruits of sanctification; and if the ordinance of life stand, so shall the ordinance of fruits, John xv. 16. Eph. ii. 10. If he hath appointed thee to life, it is certain he has also ordained thee to fruits, and chosen thee to be holy; so that whatever soul casts by the study of this, there is too gross a brand of perdition upon its forehead. It is true, all is already determined with him, and he is incapable of any change, or shadow of turning. Nothing then wants, but he is in one mind about it, and thy prayer cannot turn him. Yet a godly soul will pray with more confidence, because it knows that as he determined upon all its wants and receipts, so he hath appointed this to be the very way of obtaining what it wants. This is the way of familiarity and grace. He takes with his own to make them call, and he performs his purpose in answer to their cry. But suppose there were nothing to be expected by prayer, yet I say, that is not the thing thou shouldst look to, but what is required of thee, as thy duty, to do that simply out of regard to his majesty, though thou shouldst never profit by it. This is true obedience, to serve him for his own pleasure, though we had no expectation of advantage by it. Certainly he doth not require thy supplications for this end, to move him, and in-

cline his affections toward thee, but rather as a testimony of thy homage and subjection to him; therefore, though they cannot make him of another mind than he is, or hasten performance before his purposed time, so that in reality they have no influence upon him, yet in praying, and praying diligently, thou declarest thy obligation to him, and respect to his majesty, which is all thou hast to look to, and commit the event solely to his good pleasure.

The second objection Paul mentions, tends to justify men. Why then doth he yet find fault, who hath resisted his will? Since by his will he hath claimed us with an inevitable necessity to sin, what can we do? Men cannot wrestle with him; why then doth he condemn and accuse them? "But who art thou, O man, who disputest against God?" As if Paul had said, thou art a man, and so I am, why then lookest thou for an answer from me? Let us rather both consider whom we speak of, whom thou accusest, and whom I defend. It is God; what art thou then to charge him, or what am I so to clear him? Believing ignorance is better than presumptuous knowledge, especially in those forbidden secrets, in which it is more concerning to be ignorant with faith and admiration, than to know with presumption. Dispute thou, O man, I will wonder; reply thou, I will believe. Doth it become thee, the clay, to speak so to thy former, "Why hast thou made me thus?" Let the consideration of the absolute right and dominion of God over us, more than any creature hath over another, yea, or over themselves; let that restrain us, and keep us within bounds. He may do with us what he pleaseth, for his own honour and praise, but it is his will that we should leave all the blame to ourselves, and rather behold the evident cause of our destruction in our sin, which is nearer us, than to search into a secret and incomprehensible cause in God's counsel.

XVII.

THE WORK OF CREATION.

Heb. xi. 3.—Through faith we understand that the worlds were made, &c. See also Gen. i.

We are come down from the Lord's purposes and decrees to the execution of them, which is partly in the works of creation, and partly in the works of providence. The Lord having resolved upon it to manifest his own glory, did, in that due and predeterminate time, apply his own power to this business. Having in great wisdom conceived a frame of the world in his mind from all eternity, he at length brings it forth, and makes it visible. We shall not insist upon the particular story of it, as it is set down in general, but only point at some things for our instruction.

First. Ye see who is the Maker of all things, of whom all things visible and invisible are,—it is God. And by this he useth to distinguish himself from idols, and the vanities of the nations, that he is that self-being, who gave all things a being, who made the heavens and the earth. This is even the most glorious manifestation of an invisible and eternal Being. These things that are made, shew him forth. If a man were travelling into a far country, and wandered into a wilderness where he could see no inhabitants, but only houses, villages, and cities built, he would straightway conceive, there hath been some workmen at this; this hath not been done casually, but by the art of some reasonable creatures. How much more may we conceive, when we look on the fabric of this world, how the heavens are stretched out for a tent to cover them that dwell on the earth, and the earth settled and established as a firm foundation for men and living creatures to abide on, how all are done in wisdom and discretion! We cannot but straightway imagine, that there must be some curious and wise contriver, and mighty creator of these

things. It is here said, "by faith we understand that the worlds were made." Indeed faith only in the word of God gives true and distinct understanding of it. Innumerable have been the wanderings and mistakes of the wise of the world about this matter, wanting this lamp and light of the word of God, which alone gives a true and perfect account of this thing. Many strange dotages and fancies have they fallen into; yet certain it is that there is so much of the glory of God engraven without on the creature, and so much reason imprinted on the souls of men within, that, if it were not for that judicial plague of the Lord's darkening their understandings, who do not glorify him in as far as they know him, no man could seriously and soberly consider on the visible world, but he would be constrained to conceive an invisible God. Would not every one think within himself, all these things, so excellent as they are, cannot be out of chance, neither could they make themselves, so that of necessity they must owe what they are to something beside themselves? And of this it is certain, that it cannot have its original from any other thing, else there should be no end; therefore it must be some Supreme Being, that is from no other, and of which are all things.

But next, consider when these things were made,—"in the beginning;" and what beginning is that? Certainly the beginning of the creation, and of time, to exclude eternity. Whatever may be said of that subtilty, that God might have created the world from all eternity, for it appears even in created things, that there is no necessity of the precedent existence of the cause, since in the same instant that many things are brought into being, in the same do they bring forth their effects, as the sun in the first instant of its creation did illuminate; yet certainly we believe from the word of the Lord, that the world is actually but of a few thousand years standing. Six are not yet run out since the first creating word was spoken, and since the Spirit of the Lord moved upon the waters. And this we know also, that if it had pleased his majesty, he might have created the world

many thousand years before that; so that it might have been at this day of ten hundred times ten thousand years standing, and he might have given it as many years as there are numbers of men and angels, beasts, yea, and pickles [*i. e.* particles] of sand upon the sea coast. But it was his good pleasure, that that very point of time in which it was created should be the beginning of time, and from that he gives us a history of the world, upon which the church of God may rest, and so seek no other god but the God that made these heavens and earth.

This will not satisfy the ungodly curiosity and vanity of men's spirits, who will reproach the Maker for not applying sooner to his work, and sitting idle such an immeasurable space of eternity. Men wonder what he could be doing all that time, if we may call it time which hath no beginning, and how he was employed. I beseech you, restrain such thoughts in you with the fear of his glorious and incomprehensible majesty, who gives no account of his matters. It is enough that this is his good pleasure to begin then; and he conceals his reasons, to prove the sobriety of our faith, that all men may learn an absolute and simple stooping to his majesty's pleasure. Remember that which a godly man answered some wanton curious wit, who in scorn demanded the same of him—"He was preparing hell for curious and proud fools," said he. Let us then keep our hearts as with a bridle, and repress their boundless wanderings within bounds, lest we, by looking upward, before the beginning of the world, to see what God was doing, fall headlong into the eternal pit of destruction, and into the hands of the living God. God hath shewn himself marvellously these six thousand years in the upholding this world. If we did consider these continued and repeated testimonies of his glory, we would be overwhelmed with what we find, though we search no farther; and suppose we would please ourselves to imagine, that it had been created many years before, yet that doth not silence and stop the insolence of men's minds, for it always might be inquired, what the Lord was

doing before that time. For eternity is as immensurable before those multiplied thousands of years as before naked six. Let out imagination sit down to subtract from eternity as many thousands as it can multiply by all the varieties and numbers in the world, yet there is nothing abated from eternity. It is as infinite in extent before that, as before the present six thousand; and yet we may conceive that the Lord hath purposed in the beginning of the world to declare more manifestly to our understanding his eternity his self sufficiency and liberty;—his eternity, that when we hear of how short standing the creature is, we may go upward to God himself, and his everlasting being, before the foundations of it were laid, may shine forth more brightly to our admiration. When we can stretch our conceptions so immensurably as far beyond the beginning of the world, and yet God is still beyond the utmost reach of our imagination,—for who can find out the beginning of that which hath not a beginning to be found out?—and our most extended apprehensions fall infinitely short of the days of the Ancient of days, O how glorious then must his being be, and how boundless! His self-sufficiency and perfection doth herein appear, that from such an inconceivable space he was as perfect and blessed in himself as now. The creatures add nothing to his perfection or satisfaction. He was as well pleased with his own all-comprehending being, and with the very thought and purpose of making this world, as now he is when it is made. The idea of it in his mind gave him as great contentment as the work itself when it is done. O! to conceive this aright, it would fill a soul with astonishing and ravishing thoughts of his blessedness! Poor men weary if they be not one way or other employed without; so indigent are all creatures at home, that they would weary if they went not abroad without themselves. But to think how absolutely God is well pleased with himself, and how all imaginable perfections can add nothing to his eternal self-complacency and delight in his own being, it would certainly ravish a soul to delight in God

also: and as his self-sufficiency doth herein appear, so his liberty and freedom is likewise manifested in it. If the world had been eternal, who would have thought that it was free for his majesty to make it or not, but that it had flowed from his glorious being with as natural and necessary a resultance, as light from the body of the sun? But now it appears to all men, that for his pleasure they are and were created; that it was simply the free and absolute motion of his will, that gave a being to all things, which he could withhold at his pleasure, or so long as he pleased.

Thirdly. We have it to consider, in what condition he made all these things—"very good," and that to declare his goodness and wisdom. The creature may well be called a large volume, extended and spread out before the eyes of all men, to be seen and read of all. It is certain, if these things, all of them in their orders and harmonies, or any of them in their beings and qualities, were considered in relation to God's majesty, they would teach and instruct both the fool and the wise man in the knowledge of God. How many impressions hath he made in the creatures, which reflect upon any seeing eye the very image of God! To consider of what a vast and huge frame the heavens and the earth are, and yet but one throne to his majesty, the footstool whereof is this earth, wherein vain men erect many palaces; to consider what a multitude of creatures, what variety of fowls in the heaven, and what multiplicity of beasts upon the earth, what armies, as Moses speaks, Gen. ii. 1, and yet that none of them all are useless, but all of them have some special ends and purposes they serve for; so that there is no discord nor disorder, no superfluity nor want in all this monarchy of the world. All of them conspire together in such a discord, or disagreeing harmony, to one great purpose,—to declare the wisdom of him who "made every thing beautiful in its time," and every thing most fit and apposite for the use it was created for; so that "the whole earth is full of his goodness." He makes every creature good one to another, to supply one another's necessities; and then, notwithstand-

ing of so many different natures and dispositions between elements, and things composed of them, yet all these contrarities have such a commixion, and are so moderated by supreme art, that they make up jointly one excellent and sweet harmony or beautiful proportion in the world. O how wise must he be who alone contrived it all! We can do nothing except we have some pattern and copy before us; but now upon this ground which God hath laid, man may fancy many superstructures. But when he stretched out the heaven, and laid the foundation of the earth, "who, being his counsellor, taught him?" At whom did his Spirit take counsel? Certainly, none of all these things would have entered into the heart of man to consider or contrive, Isa. xl. 12, 13. Some ruder spirits do gaze upon the huge and prodigious pieces of the creation, as whales and elephants, &c. But a wise Solomon will go to the school of the ant to learn the wisdom of God, and choose out such a simple and mean creature for the object of his admiration. Certainly, there are wonders in the smallest and most inconsiderable creatures which faith can contemplate. O the curious ingenuity and draught of the finger of God, in the composition of flies, bees, flowers, &c. Men ordinarily admire more some extraordinary things; but the truth is, the whole course of nature is one continued wonder, and that greater than any of the Lord's works without the line. The straight and regular line of the wisdom of God, who, in one constant course and tenor, hath ordained the actions of all his creatures, comprehends more wonders and mysteries, as the course of the sun, the motion of the sea, the hanging of the earth in the empty place upon nothing. These, we say, are the wonders indeed, and comprehend something in them which all the wonders of Egypt and the wilderness cannot parallel. But it is the stupid security of men, that are only awakened by some new and unusual passages of God's works, beyond that straight line of nature.

Then, fourthly, Look upon the power of God in making all of nothing, which is expressed here in Heb. xi.

There is no artificer but he must have matter, or his art will fail him, and he can do nothing. The mason must have timber and stones laid to his hand, or he cannot build a house; the goldsmith must have gold or silver ere he can make a cup or a ring. Take the most curious and quick inventor of them all—they must have some matter to work upon, or their knowledge is no better than ignorance. All that they can do is, to give some shape or form, or to fashion that in some new model which had a being before. So that whatever men have done in the world, their works are all made up of those things which appear, and art and skill to form and fashion that excellently which before was in another mould and fashion. But he needs not sit idle for want of materials, because he can make his materials; and therefore, in the beginning he made heaven and earth, not as they now are, but he made first the matter and substance of this universe, but it was as yet a rude and confused chaos or mass, all in one lump, without difference. But then his majesty shews his wisdom and art, his excellent invention, in the following days of the creation, in ordering, and beautifying, and forming the world as it is, and that his power might be the more known; for how easy is it for him to do all this? There needs no more for it but a word,—let it be and it is. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Not a word pronounced, and audibly composed of letters and syllables,—mistake it not so, but a word inwardly formed, as it were, in his infinite Spirit. Even the inclination and beck of his will suffices for his great work. Ye see what labour and pains we have in our business, how we toil and sweat about it, what wrestlings and strivings in all things we do; but behold what a great work is done without pain and travail! It is a laborious thing to travel through a parcel of this earth, which is yet but as the point of the universe. It is troublesome to lift or carry a little piece of stone or clay; it is a toil even to look upward and number the stars of heaven. But it was no toil, no difficult thing to

his majesty, to stretch out these heavens in such an infinite compass ; for as large as the circumference of them is, yet it is as easy to him to compass them, as it is to us to span a finger-length or two. It is no difficulty to him to take up hills and mountains, as the dust of the balance, in his hand, and weigh them in scales. Hath he not chained the vast and huge mass of the weighty earth and sea, in the midst of the empty place, without a supporter, without foundations or pillars? "He hangeth it on nothing." What is it, I pray you, that supports the clouds? Who is it that binds up their waters in such a way that the clouds are not rent under them, even though there be more abundance of water in them than is in all the rivers and waters round about us? Job xxvi. 7, 8. Who is it that restrains and sets bounds to the sea, that the waters thereof, though they roar, yet do not overflow the land, but this almighty Jehovah, whose decree and commandment is the very compass, the bulwark over which they cannot flow? And all this he doth with more facility than men can speak. If there were a creature that could do all things by speaking, that were a strange power. But yet that creature might be wearied of speaking much. "But he speaks, and it is done." His word is a creating word of power, which makes things that are not to be, and there is no wearying of him besides, for he is almighty and cannot faint. But why then did he take six days for his work? Might he not with one word of his power have commanded this world to issue out of his omnipotent virtue thus perfect as it is? What needed all this compass? Why took he six days, who in a moment could have done it all with as much facility? Indeed herein the Lord would have us to adore his wisdom as well as his power. He proceeds from more imperfect things to more perfect; from a confused chaos to a beautiful world; from motion to rest, to teach man to walk through this wilderness and valley of tears—this shapeless world, into a more beautiful habitation, through the tossings of time, into an eternal sabbath of rest,

whither their works shall follow them, and they shall rest from their labours. He would teach us to take a steadfast look of his work, and that we should be busied all the days of our pilgrimage and sojourning, in the consideration of the glorious characters of God upon the works of his hands. We see that it is but passing looks and glances of God's glory we take in the creatures; but the Lord would have us to make it our work and business all the week through, as it was his to make them. He would in this teach us his loving care of men, who would not create man till he had made for him so glorious a house, replenished with all good things. It had been a darksome and irksome life to have lived in the first chaos without light; but he hath stretched over him the heavens as his tent, and set lights in them to distinguish times and seasons, and ordained the waters their proper bounds and peculiar channels, and then maketh the earth to bring forth all manner of fruit; and when all is thus disposed, then he creates man. To this God, the Maker of heaven and earth, be glory and praise.

XVIII.

OF CREATION.

Heb. xi. 3.—Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Heb. i. 14.—Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

THERE is nothing more generally known than this, that God at the beginning made the heaven and the earth, and all the host of them, the upper or the celestial, the lower or sublunary world. But yet there is nothing so little believed or laid to heart. "By faith we understand that the worlds were made." It is one of the first articles of the creed, indeed—"Father, almighty Maker of heaven

and earth." But I fear that creed is not written in the tables of flesh, that is, the heart. There is a twofold mistake among men about the point of believing. Some, and the commoner sort, do think it is no other than simply to know such a thing, and not to question it; to hear it, and not to contradict it, or object against it; therefore they do flatter themselves in their own eyes, and do account themselves to have faith in God, because they can say over all the articles of their belief. They think the word is true, and they never doubted of it. But, I beseech you, consider how greatly you mistake a main matter of weighty concernment. If you will search it, as before the Lord, you will find you have no other belief of these things than children use to have, whom you teach to think or say any thing. There is no other ground of your not questioning these truths of the gospel, but because you never consider them, and so they pass for current. Do not deceive yourselves—"with the heart man believes." It is a heart-business, a soul-matter, no light and useless opinion, or empty expression which you have learned from a child. You say, you believe in God, the Maker of heaven and earth; and so say children, who doubt no more of it than you, and yet in sadness they do not retire within their own hearts, to think what an One he is. They do not remember him in the works of his hands. There is no more remembrance of that true God than if no such thing were known. So it is among you,—you would think we wronged you if we said, ye believed not that God made the world; and yet certainly, all men have not this faith, whereby they understand truly in their heart, the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God appearing in it; that is the gift of God, only given to them that shall be saved. If I should say, that you believe not the most common principles of religion, you will think it hard; and yet there is no doubt of it, that the most common truths are least believed. And the reason is plain, because men have learned them by tongue, and there is none that question them; and therefore, very

few ever in sadness and in earnest, consider of them. You say that God made heaven and earth, but how often do you think on that God? and how often do you think on him with admiration? Do ye at all wonder at the glory of God when you gaze on his works? Is not this volume always obversant before your eyes—every thing shewing and declaring this glorious Maker. Yet who is it that taketh more notice of him than if he were not at all? Such is the general stupidity of men, that they never ponder and digest these things in their heart, till their soul receive the stamp of the glory and greatness of the invisible God, which shines most brightly in those things that are visible, and be in some measure transformed in their minds, and conformed to those glorious appearances of him, which are engraven in great characters in all that do at all appear. There is another mistake peculiar to some, especially the Lord's people, that they think faith is limited to some few particular and more unknown and hidden truths and mysteries of the gospel. Ye think that it is only true believing, to embrace some special gospel truths, which the multitude of people know nothing of, as the tenor of the covenant of grace and works, &c. And for other common principles of God's making and ruling the world, you think that a common thing to believe them. But, saith the apostle, "by faith we understand that the worlds were made." It is that same faith spoken of in the end of the 10th chapter, by which the "just shall live." So then, here is a point of saving faith, to believe with the heart in God, the Creator and Father almighty; to take a view of God's almighty power, and sufficient goodness and infinite wisdom, shining in the fabric of the world, and that with delight and admiration at such a glorious fountain-being;—to rise up to his majesty by the degrees of his creatures. This is the climbing and aspiring nature of faith. You see how much those saints in the Old Testament were in this; and certainly they had more excellent and beseeming thoughts of God than we. It should make Christians

ashamed, that both heathens, who had no other book opened to them, but that of nature, did read it more diligently then we; and that the saints of old, who had not such a plain testimony of God as we now have, did yet learn more out of the book of the creature, than we do both out of it and the Scriptures. We look on all things with such a careless eye; and do not observe what may be found of God in them. I think, verily, there are many Christians, and ministers of the Gospel, who do not ascend into those high and ravishing thoughts of God, in his being and working, as would become even mere naturalists. How little can they speak of his majesty, or think as it becomes his transcendant glory. There is little in sermons or discourses that holds out any singular admiring thoughts of a Deity; but in all these we are as common and careless as if he were an idol.

It is not in vain that it is expressed thus, "by faith we know that the worlds were made." For certainly the firm believing and pondering of this one truth would be of great moment and use to a Christian in all his journey. You may observe in what stead it is to the saints in Scripture. This raises up a soul to high thoughts, and suitable conceptions of his glorious name, and so conforms the worship of his majesty unto his excellency. It puts the stamp of divinity upon it, and spiritualizes the thoughts and affections, so as to put a true difference between the true God, and the gods that made not the heavens and the earth. Alas, the worship of many Christians speaks out no diviner or higher object than a creature! it is so cold, so formal, and empty, so vain and wandering. There is no more respect testified unto him, than we would give unto some eminent person. You find in the Scripture how the strain of the saints' affections and devotion rises, when they take up God in his absolute supremacy above the creatures, and look on him as the alone fountain of all that is worth the name of perfection in them. A soul in that consideration cannot choose but assign unto him the most eminent seat in the heart, and gather those af-

fections which are scattered after the creatures, into one channel, to pour them out on him who is all in all, and hath all that which is lovely in the creatures in an eminent degree. Therefore know what you are formed for,—to shew forth his praise, to gather and take up from the creatures all the fruits of his praise, and offer them up to his majesty. This was the end of man, and this is the end of a Christian. You are made for this, and you were redeemed for this, to read upon the volumes of his works and word, and from thence extract songs of praise to his majesty.

As this would be of great moment to the right worshipping of God, and to the exercise of true holiness, so it is most effectual to the establishing of a soul in the confidence of the promises of God. When a soul by faith understands the world was made by God, then it relies with confidence upon that same word of God, as a word of power, and hopes against hope. There are many things in the Christian's way betwixt him and glory, which look as insuperable. Thou art often emptied into nothing, and stripped naked of all encouragements, and there is nothing remaining but the word of God's promises to thee and to the church, which seems contrary to sense and reason. Now, I say, if thou do indeed believe that the world was made by God, then out of all question thou mayest silence all thy fears with this one thought—God created this whole frame out of nothing, he commanded the light to shine out of darkness, then certainly he can give a being to his own promises. Is not his word of promise as sure and effectual as his word of command? This is the grand encouragement of the church, both offered by God, from Isa. chap. xl., and made use of by his saints, as David, Hezekiah, &c. What is it would disquiet a soul if it were reposed on this rock of creating power and faithfulness? This would always sound in its ears,—"Faint not, weary not, Jacob, I am God, and none else. The portion of Jacob is not like others." Be it inward or outward difficulties, suppose hell and earth combined to-

gether, let all the enemies of a soul, or of the church assemble, here is one for all. The God that made the heaven and the earth can speak, "and it is done," command, "and it stands fast!" He creates peace, and who then can make trouble, when he gives quietness to a nation, or to a person? Almighty power works in saints and for saints. Let us trust in him!

XIX.

OF THE CREATION OF MAN.

Gen. i. 26, 27.—And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. With Eph. iv. 24.—And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. And Heb. iii. 10.—Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.

While we descend from the meditation of the glory of God shining in the heavens, in sun, moon, and stars, unto the consideration of the Lord's framing of man after this manner, we may fall into admiration with the Psalmist, Psal. viii. "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldst remember him?" It might indeed drown us in wonder, and astonish us, to think what special notice he hath taken of such a creature from the very beginning, and put more respect upon him than upon all the more excellent works of his hands. You find here the creation of man expressed in other terms than was used before. He said, "let there be light, and it was; let there be dry land," &c. But it is not such a simple word as that, "but let us make man according to our image;" as if God had called a consultation about it. What! was there any more difficulty in

this than in the rest of his works? Needed he any advisement about his frame and constitution? No certainly, for there was as great work of power, as curious pieces of art and wisdom, which were instantly done upon his word. He is not a man that he should advise or consult. As there is no difficulty nor impediment in the way of his power, (he doth all that he pleases, *ad nutum*, at his very word or nod, so easy are impossibilities to him); so there is nothing hard to his wisdom, no knot but it can loose, nothing so curious or exquisite, but he can as curiously contrive it, as the most common and gross pieces of the creation; and therefore, "he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." But ye have here expressed, as it were, a council of the holy and blessed Trinity about man's creation, to signify to us, what peculiar respect he puts upon that creature, and what special notice he takes of us, that of his own free purpose and good pleasure he was to single and choose out man from among all other creatures, for the more eminent demonstration of his glorious attributes of grace, mercy, and justice upon him; and likewise to point out the excellency that God did stamp upon man in his creation beyond the rest of the creatures, as the apostle shews the excellency of Christ above angels,—"to which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son?" Heb. i. 5. So we may say, of which of the creatures said he at any time, "come, let us make them in our image, after our likeness?" O how should this make us listen to hear, earnest to know what man once was, how magnified of God, and set above the works of his hands! There is a great desire in men to search into their original, and to trace backward the dark footsteps of antiquity, especially if they be put in expectation of attaining any honourable or memorable extraction. How will men love to hear of the worth of their ancestors? But what a stupidity doth possess the most part, in relation to the high fountain and head of all, that they do not aim so high as Adam, to know the very estate of human nature. Hence it is that the most part of people lie still

astonished, or rather stupid and senseless, after this great fall of man, because they never look upward to the place and dignity from whence man did fall. It is certain, you will never rightly understand yourselves, or what you are, till ye know first what man was made. You cannot imagine what your present misery is, till you once know what that felicity was in which man was made,—"let us make man in our image." Some have called man μικροκοσμος, a little world, a compend of the world, because he hath heaven and earth, as it were, married together in him —two most remote and distant natures, the dust of the earth, and the immortal spirit, which is called the breath of God, sweetly linked and conjoined together, with a disposition and inclination one to another. The Lord was in this piece of workmanship, as it were, to give a narrow and short compend of all his works, and so did associate in one piece, with marvellous wisdom, being, living, moving, sense, and reason, which are scattered abroad in the other creatures, so that a man carries these wonders about with him, which he admires without him. At his bare and simple word, this huge frame of the world started out of nothing. But in this, he acts the part of a cunning artificer,—"let us make man." He makes rather than creates, first raises the walls of flesh, builds the house of the body with all its organs, all its rooms; and then he puts in a noble and divine guest to dwell in it. He breathes in it the breath of life. He incloses, as it were, an angel within it, and marries these together in the most admirable union and communion that can be imagined, so that they make up one man.

But that which the Lord looks most into in this work, and would have us most to consider, is that image of himself that he did imprint on man—"Let us make man in our own image." There was no creature but it had some engravings of God upon it, some curious draughts and lineaments of his power, wisdom, and goodness upon it, and therefore the heavens are said to shew forth his glory, &c. But whatever they have, it is but the lower part

of that image, some dark shadows and resemblances of him. But that which is the last of his works, he makes it according to his own image, *tanquam ab ultima manu.* He therein gives out himself to be read and seen of all men as in a glass. Other creatures are made, as it were, according to the similitude of his footstep, *ad similitudinem vestigii*, but man *ad similitudinem faciei*, according to the likeness of his face,—"in our image, after our likeness." It is true there is only Jesus Christ his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express substantial image of his person, who resembles him perfectly and thoroughly in all properties, so that he is *alter idem,* another self, both in nature, properties, and operations,—so like him, that he is one with him, so that it is rather an oneness than a likeness. But man he created according to his own image, and gave him to have some likeness to himself,—likeness, I say, not sameness or oneness. That is high indeed, to be like God. The notion and expression of it imports some strange thing. How could man be like God, who is infinite, incomprehensible, whose glory is not communicable to another? It is true indeed, in those incommunicable properties he hath not only no equal, but none to liken him. In these he is to be adored, and admired as infinitely transcending all created perfections and conceptions. But yet in others he has been pleased to hold forth himself to be imitated and followed. And that this might be done, he first stamps them upon man in his first moulding of him. And if ye would know what these are particularly, the apostle expresses them, Eph. iv. 24, "in knowledge, in righteousness, and true holiness," Col. iii. 10. This is the image of him who created him, which the Creator stamped on man, that he might seek him, and set him apart for himself, to keep communion with him, and to bless him. There is a spirit given to man, with a capacity to know and to will; and here is a draught and lineament of God's face, which is not engraven on any sensitive creature. It is one of the most noble and excellent operations of life, in which a man is most above beasts, to

reflect upon himself, and to know himself and his Creator. There are natural instincts given to other things, natural propensions to those things that are convenient to their own nature; but none of them have so much as a capacity to know what they are, or what they have. They cannot frame a notion of him who gave them a being, but are only proportionate to the discerning of some sensible things, and can reach no farther. He hath limited the eye within colours and light; he hath set a bound to the ear that it cannot act without sounds; and so to every sense he hath assigned its own proper stance in which it moves. But he teaches man knowledge, and he enlarges the sphere of his understanding beyond visible or sensible things, to things invisible,—to spirits. And this capacity he has put in the soul,—to know all things, and itself among the rest. The eye discerns light, but sees not itself; but he gives a spirit to man to know himself and his God. And then there is a willing power in the soul, by which it diffuses itself towards any thing that is conceived as good. The understanding directing, and the will commanding according to its direction, and then the whole faculties and senses obeying such commands, which makes up an excellent draught of the image of God. There was a sweet proportion and harmony in Adam; all was in due place and subordination. The motions of immortal man did begin within. The lamp of reason did shine and give light to it, and till that went before, there was no stirring, no choosing, no refusing; and when reason, which was one sparkle of the divine nature, or a ray of God's light reflected into the soul of man,—when once that did appear to the discerning of good and evil, this power was in the soul, to apply the whole man accordingly, to choose the good and refuse the evil. It had not been a lively resemblance of God to have a power of knowing and willing simply, unless these had been beautified and adorned with supernatural and divine graces of spiritual light, and holiness, and righteousness. These make up the lively colour, and complete the image of God upon the soul.

There was a divine light which did shine in upon the understanding, ever till sin interposed and eclipsed it; and from the light of God's countenance did the sweet heat and warmness of holiness and uprightness in the affections proceed, so that there was nothing but purity and cleanness in the soul, no darkness of ignorance, no muddiness of carnal affections, but the soul pure and transparent, to receive the refreshing and enlightening rays of God's glorious countenance. And this was the very face and beauty of the soul. It is that only that is the beauty and excellency of the creature,—conformity to God. And this was throughout, in understanding and affections, the understanding conformed to his understanding, discerning between good and evil. And conformed it behoved to be, for it was but a ray of that sun, a stream of that fountain of wisdom, and a light derived from that primitive light of God's understanding. And then the will did sympathize as much with his will, approving and choosing what he approved, and refusing that which he hated. *Idem velle atque idem nolle, ea demum firma est amicitia.* That was the conjunction, and it was more strict than any tie among men. There were not two wills; they were, as it were, one. The love of God reflecting into the soul, did, as it were, carry the soul back again unto him; and that was the conforming principle which fashioned the whole man without and within, to his likeness, and to his obedience. Thus man was formed for communion with God, —this likeness behoved to be, or they could not join as friends.

But now this calls us to a sad meditation, to think from whence we have fallen, and so how great our fall is. To fall from such a blessed estate, that must be great misery. Satan hath spoiled us of our rich treasure, that glorious image of holiness, and hath drawn upon our souls the very visage of hell, the lineaments of this hellish countenance; but the most part of men lie stupid, insensible of any thing, as beasts that are felled with their fall, that can neither find [*i. e.* feel] pain nor rise. If we could but return and

consider what are all those sad and woeful consequences of sin in the world, what a strange distemper it hath put in the creation, what miseries that one fall hath brought on all mankind,—I am sure by these bruises we might conjecture what a strange fall it hath been. Sin did interpose between God and us, and this darkened our souls and killed them. The light of knowledge was put out, and the life of holiness extinguished, and now there remains nothing of all that stately building, but some ruins of common principles of reason, and honesty engraven on all men's consciences, which may shew unto us what the building hath been. We have fallen from holiness, and so from happiness. Our souls are deformed and defiled. You see what an ill-favoured thing it is, to see a child wanting any members. O if sin were visible, how ugly would the shape of the soul be to us, since it lost the very proportion and visage of it, that is, God's image! Let us consider this doctrine, that we may know from whence we have fallen, and into what a gulph of sin and misery we have fallen, that the news of Jesus Christ, a Mediator and Redeemer of fallen man, may be sweet unto us. Thus it pleased the Lord to let his image be marred and quite spoiled in us, for he had this design to repair it, and renew it better than of old, and for this end he hath created Christ according to his image. He hath stamped that image of holiness upon his flesh, to be a pattern, and not only so, but a pledge also, of restoring such souls as flee unto him for refuge, unto that primitive glory and excellency. Know then, that he hath made his Son like unto us, that we might again be made like unto him. He said, let one of us be made man, in the counsel of redemption, that so it might again be said, let man be made like unto us, in our image. It is a second creation must do it, and O that you would look upon your hearts to inquire if it be framed in you! Certainly you must again be created into that image if you belong to Christ. To him be praise and glory.

XX.

GOD'S WORKS OF PROVIDENCE.

Rom. xi. 36.—For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever, Amen. Psal. ciii. 19.—The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens: and his kingdom ruleth over all. Mat. x. 29.—Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

THERE is nothing more commonly confessed in words, than that the providence of God reaches to all the creatures and their actions; but I believe there is no point of religion so superficially and slightly considered by the most part of men. The most part ponder none of these divine truths. There is nothing above their senses which is the subject of their meditations. And for the children of God, I fear many do give such truths of God too common and coarse entertainment in their minds, through a conceit of the commonness of them. I know not what we are taken up with in this age,—with some particular truths more remote from the knowledge of others in former times, or some particular cases concerning ourselves. You will find the most part of Christians stretch not their thoughts beyond their own conditions or interests, or some particular questions about faith and repentance, &c. And in the mean time the most weighty points of religion, which have been the subject of the meditation and admiration of saints in all ages, are wholly laid aside, through a misapprehension of their commonness, as if a man would despise the sun and the air, and prefer some rare piece of stone or timber to them. Certainly, as in the disposal of the world, the Lord hath in great wisdom and goodness made the most needful and useful thing most common; those, without which man cannot live, are always obvious to us, so that if any thing be more rare, it is not necessary: so in this universe of religion, he in mercy and wisdom hath

so framed all, that those points of truth and belief, which are most near the substance of salvation, and necessary to it, and most fit to excercise us in true godliness,—these are every where to be found, partly engraven on men's hearts, partly set down most clearly and often in Scripture, that a believing soul can look no where but it must breathe in that air of the gospel, and look upon that common Sun of Righteousness, God the Creator, and the healing Sun, Christ the Redeemer, shining every where in Scripture. The general providence of God and the special administration of Christ the Saviour, these are common, and these are essential to our happiness. Therefore the meditation of Christians should run most upon them, and not always about some particular questions or debates of the time. It is a strange thing how people should be more affected with a discourse on the affairs of the time, or on some inward thoughts of their own hearts, than if one should speak of God's universal kingdom over all men and nations. That is accounted a general and ordinary discourse; even as if men would set at nought the sun's light, because it shines to all, and every day; or would despise the water, because it may be found every where. Let the sun be removed for some few days, and O what would the world account of it beyond all your curious devices or rare enjoyments! This is it which would increase to more true godliness, if rightly believed, than many other things ye are busied withal. It is our general view of them makes them but general. I spoke once upon this word, Rom. xi. 36, but only in reference to the end of man, which is God's glory; but the words do extend further, and we must now consider what further they hold forth. The apostle hath been speaking of the Lord's unsearchable ways and judgments towards men in the dispensation of grace and salvation, how free and how absolute he is in that. And this he strengthens by the supreme wisdom of God, who did direct him. Why dost thou, man, take upon thee to direct him now? For, where was there any counsellor when he alone contrived all the frame of this world, and then by sovereign high-

ness and supremacy over the creatures, disposed of them? For he is debtor to none, therefore none can quarrel him for giving or not giving: for who was it that gave him first, for which he should give a recompense? Was there any could present him with a gift? Nay, none could, saith he, "for of him, and through him, and for him are all things:" and therefore he must prevent men. For from whence should that gift of the creature, which could oblige him, have its rise? It must be of God, if it be a creature, and therefore he is in no man's common; he must give it ere we have it to give him again.

The words are most comprehensive. They comprehend all things, and that is very large. There is nothing without this compass, and they comprehend all the dependence of things. Things depend upon that which made them, that which preserves them, and that for which they are made. All things depend on him as their producing cause, that first gives them a being; "for of him are all things." They also depend on him as their conserving cause, who continues their being by that self-same influence wherewith he gave it; "for through him are all things." And then they depend on him as their final cause, for whose glory they are, and are continued; for, "for him are all things." Thus you have the beginning, the continuance, and the end of the whole creation. This word may lead us through all; from God, as the beginning, the alpha and original of their being; through God, as the only supporter, confirmer, and upholder of their being; and unto God, as the very end for which they have their being. Now, to travel within this compass; to walk continually within this circle, and to go along this blessed round; to begin at God, and to go along all our way with him, till we arrive and end at God; and thus to do continually in the journey of meditation, when it surveys any of his works,—this were, indeed, the very proper work, and the special happiness man was created for; and, I may say, a great part of that which a Christian is created for. Again, there would be nothing more power-

ful to the conforming of a soul to God, and to his obedience and fear than this, to have that persuasion firmly rooted in the heart—"that of God are all things;" that whatever it be, good or evil, that befalls us or others; whatever we observe in the world, that is the subject of the thoughts and discourses of men, and turns men's eyes after them, —that all that is of God; that is, it is in the world; it started out of nothing at his command; it is, because his power gave it a being; and in this consideration to overlook, and in a manner forget, all second causes; to have such affecting and uptaking thoughts of the first principle of all these motions, as to regard the lower wheels, that are next us, no more than the hand or the sword that a man strikes us with; as if these second causes had no influence of their own, but were merely acted and moved by this supreme power, as if God did nothing by them, but only at their presence. We should so labour to look on those things he doth by creatures, as if he did them alone without the creatures; as if he were this day creating a world. Certainly, the solid faith of God's providence will draw off the covering of the creature, and espy the secret almighty power which acts in every thing to bring forth his good pleasure concerning them. And then to consider, with that same seriousness of meditation, that that same everlasting arm which made them, is under them to support them; that the most noble and excellent creatures are but streams, rays, images, and shadows of God's majesty, which, as they have their being by derivation, so they have their continuance by that same continued influence; so that if he would interpose between himself and them, or withdraw his countenance, or stop his influence, the most sufficient of them all should evanish, as the sun-beams dry up the streams of a fountain, and disappear as the image of the glass, Psal. civ. 29, 30. O that place were a pertinent object of a Christian's meditation; how much of God is to be pressed out of it by serious pondering of it! "Thou hidest thy face and they are troubled; thou takest away thy breath and they die;

thou sendest out thy Spirit and they are created." It is even with the very being and faculties of the creature as with the image in the glass, which, when the face removes, it is seen no more. The Lord, as it were, breathes into them a being; and when he takes in his breath they perish; and when he sends it out again they are renewed. We do not wonder at the standing of the world, but think, if we had been witnesses of the making of it, we would have been filled with admiration. But certainly it is only our stupidity that doth not behold that same wonder continued, for what is the upholding of this by his power, but a very continued and repeated creation?—which influence were able to bring a world out of nothing. If this had not been before the virtue and power he employs now in making them subsist, that same alone, without any addition of power, would have in the beginning made all this to be of nothing; so that the continuance of the world is nothing else but an uninterrupted, and constant flux and emanation of these things from God, as of light from the body of the sun. And then to meditate how all these things are for him and his glory, though we know no use nor end of them, yet that his majesty hath appointed them to shew forth, one way or other, the glory of his name in them; and those things which to our first and foolish apprehensions seem most contrary to him, and, as it were, to spread a cloud of darkness over his glorious name—the sins and perverse doings of men and angels; the many disorders and confusions in the world, which seem to reflect some way upon him; that yet he hath holy and glorious ends in them all, yea, that himself is the end of all; I say, to meditate on these things till our soul received the stamp of reverence, and fear, and faith in God,—this would certainly be the most becoming exercise of a Christian, to bring all things down from God, that we might return and ascend with all things again unto God.

This is the most suitable employment of a man, as reasonable, much more as Christian; that very duty he was

created for. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise," Isa. xliii. 21. And this is the shewing forth of his praise, to follow forth the footsteps of God in the word, and in the world; and to ponder these paths of divine power, and goodness, and wisdom, and to acknowledge him with our heart in all these. He made many creatures on which his glory and praise is shewed forth, and he made this creature man to shew forth that praise and that glory which is shewed forth in other creatures. O but this is a divine office! it is strange how our hearts are carried forth towards base things, and busied in many vain, impertinent, and base employments, and scarce ever mind this great one we were created for.

Certainly, this is the employment we were made for, to deduce all things from God till we can again reduce all to him with glory; to bring all down from his everlasting counsels, until we send all up to his eternal glory, together with the sacrifice of our hearts; to behold all things to be of him, that is, of his eternal counsel and decree,—to have their rise in the bosom of that; and then through him, to proceed out of the bosom of his decree and purpose, by his power, *quasi obstetricante potentia*, and then to return with all the praise and glory to his ever glorious name, "for whom are all things." There is none but they will allow God some government in the world. Some would have him as a king, commanding and doing all by deputies and substitutes. Some would have his influence general, like the sun's upon sublunary things; but how shallow are men's thoughts in regard of that which is? God has prepared, indeed, his throne in the heavens. That is true, that his glory doth manifest itself in some strange and majestic manner above; but the whole tenor of Scripture shews, that he is not shut up in heaven, but that he immediately cares for, governs, and disposes all things in the world; "for his kingdom is over all." It is the weakness of kings, not their glory, that they have need of deputies; it is his glory, not base-

ness, to look to the meanest of his creatures. It is a poor resemblance and empty shadow that kings have of him; he rules in the kingdoms of men, and to him belongs the dominion and the glory. He deserves the name of a king, whose beck heaven and earth obeys. Can a king command that the sea flow not? Can a parliament act and ordain that the sun rise not? or will these obey them? Yet at his decree and command the sun is dark, the sea stands still, the mountains tremble; "at thy rebuke the sea fled." Alas! what do we mean that we look upon creatures, and act ourselves as if we were independent in our being and moving. How many things fall out, and you call them casual, and attribute them to fortune? How many things do the world gaze upon, think upon, and discourse upon, and yet not one thought, one word of God all the time? What more contingent than the falling of a sparrow on the ground? and yet even that is not unexpected to him, but it flows from his will and counsel. What less taken notice of or known than the hairs of your head? yet these are particularly numbered by him, and so no power in the world can add to them or diminish from them, without his counsel. O what would the belief of this do to raise our hearts to suitable thoughts of God above the creatures; to increase the fear, faith, and love of God; and to abate from our fear of men, and our vain and unprofitable cares and perplexities! How would you look upon the affairs of men, the counsels, contrivances, endeavours, and successes of men, when they are turning things upside down, and plotting the ruin of his people, and establishing themselves alone in the earth? What would you think of all these revolutions as at this time? Many souls are astonished at them, and stand gazing at what is done and to be done. And this is the very language of your spirits and ways; the Lord hath forsaken the earth; the Lord seeth not. This is the language of our parliaments and people. They do imagine that they are doing their own business, and making all sure for themselves. But, O what would a soul

think that could escape above them all, and arise up to the first wheel of present motions! A soul that did stand upon the exalted tower of the word of God, and looked off it by the prospect of faith, would presently discover the circle in which all these wanderings and changes are confined, and see men, states, armies, nations, and all of them doing nothing but turning about in a round, as a horse in a mill, from God's eternal purpose, by his almighty power, to his unspeakable glory. You might behold all these extravagant motions of the creatures, inclosed within those limits, that they must begin here, and end here, though themselves are so beastly, that they neither know of whom, nor for whom their counsels and actions are. Certainly, Satan cannot break without this compass, to serve his own humour. Principalities and powers cannot do it. If they will not glorify him, he shall glorify himself by them, and upon them.

XXI.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE TOWARDS MAN.

Gen. ii. 17.—But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Gen. i. 26.—And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

THE state wherein man was created at first, you heard was exceeding good,—all things very good, and the best of all, the choicest external and visible piece of God's workmanship, made according to the most excellent pattern,—"after our image." Though it be a double misery to be once happy, yet seeing the knowledge of our misery is by the grace of God made the entry to a new happiness, it is most necessary to take a view of what man once was, that we may be more sensible of what he now is. You

may take up this image and likeness in three branches. First, there was a sweet conformity of the soul in its understanding, will, and affections unto God's holiness and light: a beautiful light in the mind, derived from that fountain-light, by which Adam did exactly know both divine and natural things. What a great difference doth yet appear between a learned man and an ignorant rude person, though it be but in relation to natural things. The one is but like a beast in comparison of the other. O how much more was there between Adam's knowledge, and that of the most learned! The highest advancement of art and industry in this life, reaches no further than to a learned ignorance of the mysteries in the works of God, and yet there is a wonderful satisfaction to the mind in it. But how much sweet complacency hath Adam had, whose heart was so enlarged as to know both things higher and lower, their natures, properties, and virtues, and several operations! No doubt could trouble him, no difficulty vex him, no controversy or question perplex him; but above all, the knowledge of that glorious and eternal Being, that gave him a being, and infused such a spirit into him,—the beholding of such infinite treasures of wisdom, and goodness, and power in him, what an amiable and refreshful sight would it be, when there was no cloud of sin and ignorance to interpose and eclipse the full enjoyment of that uncreated light! When the aspect of the sun makes the moon so glorious and beautiful, what may you conceive of Adam's soul framed with a capacity to receive light immediately from God's countenance! How fair and beautiful would that soul be, until the dark cloud of sin did interpose itself! Then consider, what a beautiful rectitude and uprightness, what a comely order and subordination would ensue upon this light, and make his will and affections wonderfully good. Eccl. vii. 29, "God made man upright." There was no thraw or crack in all, all the powers of the soul bending upright towards that Fountain of all goodness. Now the soul is crooked and bends downward towards those base earthly things that are the abasement of the soul;

then it looked upright towards God,—had no appetite, no delight but in him and his fulness, and had the moon or changeable world under its feet. There was a beauty of holiness and righteousness, which were the colours that did perfect and adorn those lineaments of the image of God, which knowledge did draw in the soul. "He was a burning and a shining light," may be truly said of Adam, who had as much life as light, as much delight in God as knowledge of him. This was the right constitution and disposition of man,—his head lifted up in holiness and love towards God, his arms stretched out in righteousness and equity towards man; and all the affections of the man being under their command, they could not trouble this sea with any tempest, because they were under a powerful commander, who kept them under such awe and obedience as the centurion his servants,—saying to one, go, and he goeth, and to another, come, and he cometh, sending out love one way, holy hatred another way. These were as wings to the bird to flee upon, as wheels to the chariot to run upon, though now it be turned just contrary, that the chariot draws the coachman, because the motion is downward. There could be no motion in an upright man's soul till the holy and righteous will give out a sentence upon it. That was the *primum mobile*, which was turned about itself by such an *intelligentia* as the understanding. And so it was in Christ,—affection could not move him, but he did move his own affections, "he troubled himself." In us the servant rides on horses, and the prince walks on foot; even as in a distempered society, the laws and ordinances proceed by an unnatural way, from the violence of unruly subjects usurping over their masters. Holy and righteous man could both raise up his affections, and compose them again, they were under such nurture and discipline. He could have said, hitherto, and no further; in which there was some resemblance of God ruling the raging and unruly sea; but now, if once they get entry into our city, they are more powerful than the governor, and will not take laws from him, but give him

rather. When we have given way to our passions, they do next what they please, not what we permit.

Next his excellency consisted in such an immunity and freedom from all fear of misery and danger, from all touch of sorrow or pain, and did enjoy such a holy complacency and delight in his own estate, as made him completely happy. In this he was like God. This is his blessedness, that he is absolutely well-pleased in himself, that he is without the reach of fear and danger, that none can impair it, none can match it. "I am God and none else;" that is sufficiency of delight to know himself, and his own sufficiency. Indeed, man was made changeable, mutably good, that in this he might know God was above him, and so might have ground of watchfulness and dependence upon him for continuance of his happiness who made him happy. But being made so upright, no disquieting fear nor perplexing care could trouble him. Then, lastly, if you add unto this, holy satisfaction with his own state and freedom, the dominion and sovereignty he had over the creatures, as a consequent flowing from that image, you may imagine what a happy creature he was. Whatsoever contentment or satisfaction the creatures could afford, all of them willingly and pleasantly would concur to bestow it upon man, without his care or toil, as if they had accounted it their happiness to serve him. What more excellent than this order? Man counting it his happiness and delight to serve God, and creatures esteeming it their happiness to serve man, all things running towards him with all their goodness, as to a common centre; and he returning all to God, from whence they did immediately flow. Thus, besides the fulness and riches of God's goodness immediately conferred upon man, he was enriched with all the store and goodness that the earth was full of.

God having made man thus, and furnished him after this manner, he gave him a law, and then he made a covenant with him. There was a law first imprinted into Adam, and then a law prescribed unto him. There was a law written in his heart, the remainder of which Paul

saith makes the Gentiles inexcusable; but it was perfectly drawn in him. All the principles and notions of good and evil were exactly drawn in it. He had a natural discerning of them, and a natural inclination to all good, and aversion from all evil, as there is a kind of law imposed by God upon other creatures, which they constantly keep, and do not swerve from, even his decree and commandment, to the obedience of which they are composed and framed. The sea hath a law and command to flow and ebb, and it is that command that breaks its proud waves on the sand, when they threaten to overflow mountains. The beasts obey a law written in their natures, of eating and drinking, of satisfying their senses, and every one hath its several instinct and propension to several operations; so God gave a more noble instinct unto man, suitable to his reasonable soul,—an instinct and impulse to please God, in such duties of holiness and righteousness, a sympathy with such ways of integrity and godliness, and an innate antipathy against such ways as were displeasing to him, or dishonourable to the creature. There is a kind of comeliness and sweet harmony and proportion between such works, as the love of God and man, the use of all for his glory, of whom all things are, and man's reasonable being. Such a thing doth suit and become it. Again, other things, as the hatred of God and men, neglect and forgetfulness of him, drunkenness and abasing lusts of that kind, do disagree, and are indecent to it. O how happy was Adam, when holiness and righteousness were not written on tables of stone, but on his heart, and when there was no need of external persuasion, but there was an inward impulse, inclining him strongly, and laying a kind of sweet necessity upon him, to that which was both his duty to God and men, and his own dignity and privilege! This was, no question, the very beauty of his soul, to be not only under a law proper and peculiar to himself, but to be inwardly framed and moulded to it, to be a living law unto himself.

But besides this inward imprinted law of holiness and

righteousness, which did without more rules direct and determine him to that which is in itself good, it pleased the Lord to prescribe and impose a positive law unto him, to command him abstinence from a thing neither good nor evil, but indifferent, and such a thing as of itself he might have done, as well as made use of any other creature. There was no difference between the fruit which was discharged him, and the fruit of the rest of the garden; there was nothing in it did require abstinence, and nothing in him either. Yet for most wise and holy ends, the Lord enjoins him to abstain from that fruit, and puts an act of restraint upon him, to abridge his liberty in that which might prove his obedience, and not hinder his happiness, or diminish it; because he furnished him abundantly beside. You may perceive two reasons of it. One is, that the sovereign power and dominion of God over all men, may be more eminently held forth, and that visibly in such a symbol and sign. He who put man in such a well-furnished house, and placed him in a plentiful and fruitful garden, reserves one tree, "thou shalt not eat thereof," to let Adam see and know, that he is the sovereign owner of all things, and that his dominion over the creatures, and their service unto him, was not so much for any natural prerogative of man above them, as out of divine bounty and indulgence, because he had chosen a creature to himself to beautify and make happy. This was a standing visible testimony, to bring man continually to remembrance of his sovereignty, that being thus far exalted above other creatures, he might know himself to be under his Creator, and that he was infinitely above him; that he might remember his own homage and subjection to God, whenever he looked upon his dominion over the creatures. And truly in other natural duties which an inward principle and instinct drives unto, the suitableness and conveniency, or beauty of the thing, doth often preponderate, and might make man to observe them, without so much regard of the will and pleasure of the Most High. But in this the Lord would have no other reason of obedience

to appear, but his own absolute will and pleasure, to teach all men to consider in their actings, rather the will of the commander, than the goodness or use of the thing commanded. And then for this reason, it was enjoined to make a more exact trial, and to take a more ample proof of Adam's obedience. Oftentimes we do things commanded of God, but upon what ground or motive? Because our own interest lies in them, because there is an inward weight and *pondus* of affection pressing us to them. The Lord commands the mutual duties between parents and children, between man and wife, between friends, duties of self-preservation and defence, and such like. And many are very exact and diligent in performing these; but from what principle, it is easy to discern. Not because they are commanded of God,—not so much as a thought of that for the most part, but because of an inward and natural inclination of affection towards ourselves and our relations, which is like an instinct and impulse driving us to those duties. And truly we may say, 'tis the goodness and bounty of the Lord that hath conjoined in most parts of commanded duties our own interest and advantage, our own inclination and propension with his authority, or else the toil and pain of them would overbalance the weight of his authority. Now then, in such duties as are already imprinted on man's heart, and consonant to his own reason, there cannot be a clear proof of obedience to God's will. The pure and naked nature of obedience doth not so clearly shine forth in the observation of these. It is no great trial of the creature's subjection of its will to his supreme will, when there are so many reasons besides his will, which may incline man's will unto it. But here, in a matter in itself pleasant to the senses, unto which he had a natural inclination, the Lord interposes himself by a command of restraint, to take full probation, whether man would submit to his good pleasure merely for itself, or whether he would obey merely because God commands. And indeed in such like duties as have no commendation but from the will and authority of the lawgiver, it will appear whether man's obedience

be pure and simple obedience, and whether men love obedience for itself alone, or for other reasons. Therefore the Lord saith, obedience is better than sacrifice, and disobedience is rebellion. Suppose, in such things as can neither hurt us nor help us, God put a restraint upon us,—though obedience may be of less worth than in other more substantial things, yet disobedience in such easy matters is most heinous, because it proclaims open rebellion against God. If it be light and easy, it is more easily obeyed, and the more sin and wickedness in disobeying: and therefore is Adam's sin called disobedience in a signal manner, Rom. v., because, by refusing such a small point of homage and subjection, he did cast off God's power and authority over him, and would not acknowledge him for his superior. This should teach us, who believe the repairing of that image by Jesus Christ, to study such a respect and reverence to God's holy will, as to do all things without more asking, why it is so. If we once know what it is, there is no more question to be asked. Of creatures we must inquire a *quare* after a *quid;* a why, after we know what their will is. But Christians should have their wills so subdued unto God's, that though no profit nor advantage were to redound by obedience, though it were in things repugnant and cross to our inclination and humour, yet we should serve and obey him, as a testimony of our homage and subjection to him. And till we learn this, and be more abstracted from our own interests in the ways of obedience, even from the interests of peace, and comfort, and liberty, we do not obey him because he commands, but for our own sakes. It is the practice of Antinomians, and contrary to true godliness, to look upon the law of God as the creature's bondage, as most of us do in our walking. A Christian in whom the image of God is renewed according to righteousness and holiness, should esteem subjection and conformity to a law, and to the will of God, his only true liberty, yea, the very beauty of the soul; and never is a soul advanced in conformity to God, till this be its delight, not a burden or task.

XXII.

OF THE FIRST COVENANT, AND THE TERMS THEREOF.

Gal. iii. 12.—The law is not of faith; but the man that doth them shall live in them. Gen. ii. 17.—But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

The Lord made all things for himself, to shew forth the glory of his name, and man in a more eminent and special manner, for more eminent manifestations of himself; therefore all his dealings towards men, whether righteous or sinful, do declare the glory of God. Particularly, in reference to the present purpose, he resolved to manifest two shining properties,—his sovereignty and goodness. His sovereignty is shewed, in giving out a law and command to the creature, and his goodness is manifested in making a covenant with his creature; as here you see the terms of a covenant, a duty required, and a promise made, and in case of failing, a threatening conformed to the promise. He might have required obedience simply, as the Lord and sovereign owner of the being and operations of the creatures; and that was enough of obligation to bind all flesh, that the Creator is lawgiver, that he who gives a being doth set bounds and limits to the exercise and use of that being. But it pleased the Lord in his infinite goodness and love, to add a promise and threatening to that law and command, and so turns it to the nature of a voluntary covenant and agreement, whereby he doth mitigate and sweeten his authority and power, and condescends so low to man, as to take on himself a greater obligation than he puts upon man, "Do this and thou shalt live." He might then, out of his absoluteness and power, have required at the creature's hand any terms he pleased, even the hardest which could be imagined, and yet no injustice in him. He might have put laws on men to re-

strain all their natural liberty, and in every thing, to proclaim nothing but his own supremacy. But O what goodness and condescension is even in the very matter of the law; and then in the manner of prescribing it with a promise! In the matter, so just and equitable to convince all men's consciences, yea, even engraven on their hearts, that he lays not many burdens on, but what men's consciences must lay on themselves; that there is nothing in it all, when summed up, harder than this,—love God most of all, and thy neighbour as thyself, which all men must proclaim to be due, though it had not been required; and but one precept added by his mere will, which yet was so easy a thing, as it was a wonder the Lord of all put no other conditions on the creatures. And then for the manner; it is propounded covenant-wise, with a promise, not to obtain the creature's consent, for it did not depend on his acceptation, he being bound to accept any terms his Lord propounded; but because the matter and all was so equitable, and the conditions so ample, that if it had been propounded to any rational man, he would have consented with an admiration at God's goodness. Indeed, if we speak strictly, there cannot be a proper covenant between God and man,—there is such an infinite distance between such unequal parties, our obedience and performance being absolutely in his power. We cannot promise it as our own, and it being but our duty, we cannot crave or expect a reward in justice, neither can he owe any thing to the creature. Yet it pleased his majesty to propound it in these terms, and to stoop so low unto men's capacities, and, as it were, come off the throne of his sovereignty, both to require such duties of men, and to promise unto them such a free reward. And the reasons of this may be plain upon God's part, and upon ours. In such dealing, he consulted his own glory, and man's good. His own glory, I say, is manifested in it, and chiefly the glory of his goodness and love, that the Most High comes down so low, as to article with his own footstool, that he changes his absolute right, into a moderate

and temperate government, and tempers his lordly and truly monarchical power, by such a commixture of gentleness and goodness, in requiring nothing but what man behoved to call reasonable and due, and in promising so much, as no creature could challenge any title to it. When the law was promulgated, "do this," eat not of this tree, Adam's conscience behoved to say, Amen, Lord, all is due, all the reason in the world for it; but when the promise is added, and the trumpet sounds longer, Thou shalt live! O more than reason, more than is due, must his conscience say! It was reason, that the most high Lord should use his footstool as his footstool, and set his servant in the place of a servant, and so keep distance from him. But how strange is it, that he humbles himself to make friendship with man, to assume him in a kind of familiarity and equality? And this Christ is not forgetful of. When he restores men, he puts them in all their former dignities, "I call you not servants but friends." Next, his wisdom doth appear in this, that when he had made a reasonable creature, he takes a way of dealing, suitable to his nature, to bring forth willing and free obedience by the persuasion of such a reward, and the terror of such a punishment. He most wisely did enclose the will of man, as it were, on both sides, with hedges of punishment and reward, which might have been a sufficient defence or guard against all the irruptions of contrary persuasions, that man might continue in obedience, and that when he went to the right hand or left, he might be kept in, by the hope of such an ample promise, and the fear of such a dreadful threatening. But then the righteousness of God doth appear in this; for there is nothing doth more illustrate the justice of the judge, than when the malefactor hath before consented to such a punishment in case of transgression, when the law is confirmed by the consent and approbation of man. Now he has man subscribing already to his judgment, and so all the world must stop their mouth and become guilty in

case of transgression of such a righteous command after such warning.

But, in the next place, it is no less for man's good. What an honour and dignity were put upon man, when he was taken into friendship with God! To be in covenant of friendship with a king, O what a dignity is it accounted! And some do account it a great privilege to be in company, and converse with some eminent and great person. But may not men say with the Psalmist, "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" Psal. viii. Again, what way more fit and suitable to stir up and constrain Adam unto a willing and constant obedience, when he had the encouragement of such a gracious reward, and the determent of such a fearful punishment? Between these two banks might the silver streams of obedience have run for ever without breaking over. He was bound to all, though nothing had been promised. But then to have such a hope, what spirits might it add to him! The Lord had been free, upon man's obedience, either to continue him his happy estate, or to denude him of it, or to annihilate him. There was no obligation lying on him. But now, what confirmation might man have by looking upon the certain recompense of reward!—when God brings himself freely under an obligation of a promise, and so ascertains it to his soul, which he could never have dreamed of, and gives him liberty to challenge him upon his faithfulness to perform it. And then, *lastly*, There was no way so fit to commend God, and sweeten him unto his soul as this. Adam knew that his goodness could not extend to God, that his righteousness could not help him, nor his wickedness hurt him, and so could expect nothing from his exact obedience. But now, when God's goodness doth so overflow upon the creature, and the Lord takes pleasure to communicate himself to make others happy, though he had need of none, O how must it engage the heart of man to a delightful remembrance,

and converse with that God! As his authority should imprint reverence, so his goodness thus manifested should engrave confidence. And thus the life of man was not only a life of obedience, but a life of pleasure and delight; not only a holy, but a happy life, yea, happy in holiness.

Now, as it was Paul's great business in preaching, to ride marches between the covenant of grace, and the covenant of works, to take men off that old broken ship to this sure plank of grace that is offered by Jesus Christ to drowning souls, so it would be our great work to shew unto you the nature of this covenant, and the terms thereof, that you may henceforth find and know that salvation to be now impossible by the law, which so many seek in it. We have no errand to speak of the first Adam, but the better to lead you to the second. Our life was once in the first, but he lost himself and us both; but the second, by losing himself, saves both. We have nothing to do to speak of the first covenant, but that we may lead you, or pursue you rather to the second, established on better terms and better promises.

The terms of this covenant are,—Do this and live. Perfect obedience without one jot of failing or falling, an entire and universal accomplishment of the whole will of God, that is the duty required of man. There is no latitude left in the bargain, to admit endeavours instead of performance, or desire instead of duty. There is no place for repentance here. If a man fail in one point, he falls from the whole promise; by the tenor of this bargain, there is no hope of recovery. If you would have the duty in a word, it is a love of God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbour as ourself, and that testified and verified in all duties and offices of obedience to God, and love to men, without the least mixture of sin and infirmity. Now, the promise on God's part is indeed larger than that duty, not only because undeserved, but even in the matter of it, it is so abundant; life, eternal life, continuance in a happy estate. There is a threatening added, "in what day thou eatest thou shalt die;" that is, thou shalt become a mor-

tal and miserable creature, subject to misery here and hereafter; which is more pressingly set down in that word, "Cursed is he that abides not in all things written in the law to do them." It is very peremptory, that men dream not of escaping wrath, when they break but in one, suppose they did abide in all the rest. Cursed is every man from the highest to the lowest—the Lord Almighty is engaged against him. His countenance, his power is against him, to destroy him and make him miserable. Whoever doth fail but in one jot of the commands, he shall not only fall from that blessed condition freely promised, but lose all that he already possessed, fall from that image of God, dominion over the creatures, and incur, instead of that possessed and expected happiness, misery here on soul and body, in pains, sicknesses, troubles, griefs, &c; and eternal misery on both, without measure, hereafter,—"eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power."

Now, "this law is not of faith," saith the apostle. This opens up the nature of the bargain; and the opposition between the present covenant and that which is made with lost sinners with a Mediator. This covenant is called, of works, "do this, and live;" to him that worketh is the promise made, though freely too. It is grace that once a reward should be promised to obedience but having once resolved to give it, herein justice appears in an equal and uniform distribution of the reward, according to works; so that where there is an equality of works there shall be an equality of reward, and no difference put between persons equal; which is the very freedom of the covenant of grace, that it passes over all such considerations, and deals equally in mercy with unequal sinners, and unequally, it may be, with them that are equal in nature.

You may ask, was not Adam to believe in God, and did not the law require faith? I answer, Christ distinguishes a twofold faith, "you believe in God, believe also in me." No question he was called to believe in God the Creator of the world, and that in a threefold consideration.

First, to depend on God the self-being and fountain-good. His own goodness was but a flux and emanation from that Sun of Righteousness, and so was to be perpetuated by constant abiding in his sight. The interposition of man's self between him and God did soon bring on this eternal night of darkness. Nature might have taught him to live in him, in whom he had life, and being, and motion, and to forget and look over his own perfections as evanishing shadows. But this quickly extinguished his life, when he began to live in himself.

Next, he was obliged to believe God's word, both threatening and promise, and to have these constantly in his view. And certainly, if he had kept in his serious consideration, the inestimable blessing of life promised, and the fearful curse of death threatened; if he had not been induced first to doubt, and then to deny the truth and reality of these, he had not attempted such a desperate rebellion against the Lord.

Then, thirdly, he was to believe and persuade himself of the Lord's fatherly love, and that the Lord was well pleased with his obedience; and this faith would certainly beget much peace and quietness in his mind, and also constrain him to love him, and live to him who loved him, and gave him life and happiness out of love. Yet this holds true that the apostle saith, "the law is not of faith," to wit, in a Mediator and Redeemer. It was a bond of immediate friendship: there needed none to mediate between God and man, there needed no reconciler where there was no odds or distance. But the gospel is of faith in a Mediator; it is the soul plighting its hope upon Jesus Christ in its desperate necessity, and so supposes man sinful and miserable in himself, and in his own sense too, and so putting over his weight and burden upon one whom God hath made mighty to save. The law is not of faith, but of perfect works, a watch-word brought in of purpose to bring men off their hankering after a broken and desperate covenant. It admits no repentance, it speaks of no pardon, it declares no cautioner or redeemer.

There is nothing to be expected, according to the tenor of that covenant, but wrath from heaven; either personal obedience in all, or personal punishment for ever. That is the very terms of it, and it knows no other thing. Either bring complete righteousness and holiness to the promise of life, or expect nothing but death.

This may be a sad meditation to us, to stand and look back to our former estate, and compare it with that into which we are fallen. That image we spoke of, is defaced and blotted out, which was the glory of the creation, and now there is nothing so monstrous, so deformed in the world as man. The corruption of the best things is always worst, the ruins of the most noble creature are most ruinous, the spot of the soul most abominable. We are nothing but a mass of darkness, ignorance, error, inordinate lust; nothing but confusion, disorder, and distempers in the soul, and in the conversation of men; and, in sum, that blessed bond of friendship with God broken, discord and enmity entered upon our side and separated us from God, and so we can expect nothing from that first covenant, but the curse and wrath threatened. By one man's disobedience sin entered upon all, and death by sin; because in that agreement Adam was a common person representing us, and thus are all men once subject to God's judgment, and come short of the glory of God, fallen from life into a state of death, and, for any thing that could be expected, irrecoverably. But it hath pleased the Lord, in his infinite mercy, to make a better covenant in Christ his Son, that, what was impossible to the law, by reason of our weakness and wickedness, his Son, sent in the flesh, condemned for sin, might accomplish, Rom. viii. 3. There is some comfort yet after this; that covenant was not the last, and that sentence was not irrevocable. He makes a new transaction, lays the iniquity of his elect upon Christ, and puts the curse upon his shoulders which was due to them. Justice cannot admit the abrogation of the law, but mercy pleads for a temperament of it. And thus the Lord dispenses with personal satisfaction, which in

rigour he might have craved; and finds out a ransom, admits another satisfaction in their name. And in the name of that Cautioner and Redeemer is salvation preached upon better terms, "believe and thou shalt be saved," Rom. x. Thou lost and undone sinner, whoever thou art, that findest thyself guilty before God, and that thou canst not stand in judgment by the former covenant; thou who hast no personal righteousness, and trustest in none, come here, embrace the righteousness of thy Cautioner; receive him, and rest on him, and thou shalt be saved.

XXIII.

WHAT MAN ONCE WAS, AND WHAT HE HATH MADE HIMSELF.

Eccl. vii. 29.—Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

The one half of true religion consists in the knowledge of ourselves, the other half in the knowledge of God; and whatever besides this, men study to know and apply their hearts unto, it is vain and impertinent, and like meddling in other men's matters, neglecting our own, if we do not give our minds to the search of these. All of us must needs grant this in the general, that it is an idle and unprofitable wandering abroad, to be carried forth to the knowledge and use of other things, and in the mean time to be strangers to ourselves, with whom we should be most acquainted. If any man was diligent and earnest in the inquiry and use of the things in the world, Solomon was. He applied his heart to seek out wisdom, and what satisfaction was in the knowledge of all things natural, and in this he attained a great degree beyond all other men. Yet he pronounces of it all after experience and trial, that "this also was vanity and vexation of spirit;" not only empty and unprofitable, and not conducing to that true blessedness he sought after; but hurtful and destruc-

tive, nothing but grief and sorrow in it. After he had proved all, with a resolution to be wise, yet it was far from him; "I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me," ver. 23. And therefore, after long wandering abroad, he returns at length home to himself, to know the estate of mankind. "Lo, this only have I found," &c. ver. 29. When I have searched all other things, and found many things by search, yet, says he, what doth it all concern me, when I am ignorant of myself? There is one thing concerns me more than all,—to know the original of man, what he once was made, and to know how far he is departed from his original. This only I have found profitable to men, and as the entry and preparation to that blessedness I inquire for,—to have the true discovery of our misery.

There are two things then, concerning man, that you have to search and to know, and that not in a trifling or curious manner, as if you had no other end in it but to know it, as men do in other things; but in a serious and earnest way, as in a matter of so much concernment to our eternal well-being. In things that relate particularly to ourselves, we labour to know them for some advantage besides the knowing of them, even though they be but small and lower things; how much more should we propose this unto ourselves in the search and examination of our own estate, not merely to know such a thing, but so to know it that we may be stirred up and provoked in the sense of it to look after the remedy that God holds forth. There are two things that you have to know—what man once was made, and how he is now unmade; how happy once, and how miserable now. And answerable to these two, are branches of the text: "God made man upright;" that he was once; "and they have sought out many inventions;" not being contented with that blessedness they were created into, by catching at a higher estate of wisdom, have fallen down into a gulph of misery, as the man that gazed on the stars above him, and did not take notice of the pit under his feet till he fell into it;

and thus man is now. So you have a short account of the two estates of men; of the estate of grace and righteousness without sin, and the estate of sin and misery without grace. You have the true story of man from the creation unto his present condition; but all the matter is, to have the lively sense of this upon our hearts. I had rather that we went home bewailing our loss, and lamenting our misery, and longing for the recovery of that blessedness, than that we went out with the exact memory of all that is spoken, and could repeat it again.

"God made man upright." At his first moulding the Lord shewed excellent art and wisdom, and goodness too. Man did come forth from under his hand in the first edition very glorious, to shew what he could do; upright, that is, all right and very exactly conformed to the noble and high pattern, endued with divine wisdom, such as might direct him to true happiness, and furnished with a divine willingness to follow that direction. The command was not above his head as a rod, but within his heart as a natural instinct. All that was within him was comely and beautiful; for that glorious light that shined upon him, having life and love with it, produced a sweet harmony in the soul. He knew his duty, and loved it, and was able to perform it. O how much is in this one word *upright!* Not only sincerity and integrity in the soul, but perfection of all the degrees and parts; no part of holiness wanting, and no measure of these parts; no mixture of darkness or ignorance; no mixture of indisposition or unwillingness. Godliness was sweet and not laborious. The love of God, possessing the heart, did conform all within and without to the will of God; and O how beautiful was that conformity! And that love of God, the fountain-being, did send forth as a stream, love and good-will to all things, as they did partake of God's image; and so holiness towards God did beget righteousness towards men, and made men partake of one another's happiness.

This is a survey of him in his integrity, as God made

him, but there follows a sad *But,*—a sad and woeful exception; "but they have sought many inventions." We cannot look upon that glorious estate whereunto man was made, but straightway we must turn our eyes upon that misery into which he hath plunged himself, and be the more affected with it, that it was once otherwise. It is misery in a high degree to have been once happy. This most of all aggravates our misery, and may increase the sense of it, that such man once was, and such we might have been, if we had not destroyed ourselves. Who can look upon these ruins, and refrain mourning? It is said, that those who saw the glory of the first temple, wept when they beheld the second, because it was not answerable to it in magnificence and glory; so, I say, it might occasion much sadness and grief, even to the children of God, in whom that image is in part repaired, and that by a second creation, to think how much more happy and blessed man once was, who had grace and holiness without sin. But certainly, it should and must be at first, before this image be restored, the bitter lamentation of a soul, to look upon itself wholly ruinous and defaced, in the view of that glorious stately fabric which once was made. How lamentable a sight is it to behold the first temple demolished, or the first creation defaced; and the second not yet begun in many souls, the foundation-stone not yet laid! It was a sad and doleful invention which Satan inspired at first into man's heart, to go about to find out another happiness; to seek how to be wise as God, an invention that did proceed from hell; how to know evil experimentally and practically by doing it. That invention hath invented and found out all the sin and misery under which the world groans. It is a poor invention to devise misery and torment to the creature. This was the height of folly and madness, for a happy creature to invent how to make itself and all others miserable. Indeed, he intended another thing—to be more happy; but pride and ambition got a deserved fall; the result of all is sin and misery.

And now from the first devilish invention, the heart of

man is possessed with a multitude of vain imaginations. Man is now become vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart is darkened. That divine wisdom he was endued withal is eclipsed, for it was a ray of God's countenance, and now he is left wholly in the dark without a guide, without a director or leader. He is turned out of the path of holiness, and so of happiness. A night of gross darkness and blindness is come on, and the way is full of pits and snares, and the end of it is at best eternal misery. And there is no lamp, no light to shine in it, to shew him either the misery that he is posting unto, or the happiness that he is fleeing from. There is nothing within him sufficient to direct his way to blessedness, and nothing willing or able to follow such a direction. And thus man is left to the invention and counsel of his own desperately wicked and deceitful heart; and that is above all plagues, to be given up to a reprobate mind. He is now left to such a tutor and guider, and it is full of inventions indeed. But they are in vain, that is, all of them insufficient for this great purpose. All of them cannot make one hair that is black, white, much less redeem the soul. But besides, they are destructive. They pretend to deliver, but they destroy. A desperate wicked heart imagineth evil continually, evil against God, and evil to our own souls. And a deceitful heart smooths over the evil, and presents it under another notion; and so, under pretence of a friend, it is the greatest enemy a man hath—a bosom enemy. All men's inventions, thoughts, cogitations, projects and endeavours, what do they tend to, but to the satisfaction of their lusts?—either the lusts of the mind, as ambition, pride, avarice, passion, revenge, and such like; or the lust of the body, as pleasure to the ears and eyes, and to the flesh. Man was made with an upright soul, with a dominion over that brutish part, more like angels; but now, all his invention runs upon that base and beastly part, how to adorn it, how to beautify it, how to satisfy it; and for this his soul must be a drudge and slave. And if men rise up to any thoughts of a

higher life, yet what is it for, but to magnify and exalt the flesh—to seek an excellency within, which is lost, and so to satisfy the pride and self-love of the heart. If any man comes this length, as to apprehend some misery, yet how vain are his inventions about the remedy of it. Not knowing how desperate the disease is, men seek help in themselves, and think, by industry, and care, and art, to raise them up in some measure, and please God by some expiations or sacrifices of their own works. Now, this tends to no other purpose, but to satisfy the lusts of man's pride; and so it increases that which was man's first malady, and keeps them from the true physician. In a word, all man's inventions are to hasten misery on him, or to blindfold himself till it come on; all his invention cannot reach a delivery from this misery. Let us therefore consider this which Solomon hath found out, and if we carefully consider it, and accurately ponder it in relation to our own souls, then have we also found it with him. Consider, I say, what man once was, and what you are now, and bewail your misery and the fountain of it, —our departure from the fountain of life and blessedness. Know what you are, not only weak but wicked, whose art and power lies only in wickedness; skilful and able only to make yourselves miserable. And let this consideration make you cast away all your confidence in yourselves, and carry you forth to a Redeemer, who hath found a ransom—who hath found out an excellent invention to cure all our distempers and desperate diseases. The counsel of the Holy Trinity that met about, if I may so speak, our creation in holiness and righteousness after his own image; that same hath consulted about the rest of it, and hath found out this course, that one of them shall be made after man's image, and for this purpose, that he may restore again God's image unto us. O bless this deep invention and happy contrivance of Heaven, that could never have bred in any breast, but in the depths of eternal wisdom! and let us abandon and forsake our own vain imaginations, and foolish inventions. Let us become

fools in our own eyes, that we may become wise. Man, by seeking to be wise, became a fool; that was an unhappy invention. Now it is turned contrary; let all men take with their folly and desperate wickedness. Let not the vain thoughts and dreams of our own well-being and sufficiency lodge within us, and we shall be made wise. Come to the Father's wisdom, unto Jesus Christ, who is that blessed invention of heaven for our remedy. "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?" O when will you be washed from them? How long shall not your thoughts transcend this temporal and bodily life? How long do you imagine to live in sin, and die in the Lord; to continue in sin and escape wrath? Why do you delude your souls with a dream of having interest in the love of God, and purchasing his favour by your works? These are some of those many inventions man hath sought out.

XXIV.

THE EVIL OF ADAM'S FIRST SIN.

Rom. v. 12.—Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

This is a sad subject to speak upon; yet it is not more sad than useful. Though it be unpleasant to hold out a glass to men, to see their own vile faces into, yet is it profitable, yea, and so necessary, that till once a soul apprehend its broken and desolate condition in the first Adam, it can never heartily embrace and come to the second Adam. You have here the woful and dreadful effects and consequents of the first transgression upon all mankind. The effect is twofold,—sin and misery, or sin and death. The subject is universal in both,—all men, the whole world. Behold what a flood of calamity hath entered at a small cranny—by one man's transgression!

May it not be said of sin in general, which the wise man speaks of strife,—the beginning of sin is as when one lets out water. Therefore it had been good leaving it off before it had been meddled with,—it entered at a small hole, but it hath overflowed a whole world since.

That which first occurs, is, that all mankind, proceeding from Adam by ordinary birth, are involved in sin by Adam's transgression. But that may seem a hard saying, that sin and death should flow unto the whole posterity who had no accession to Adam's transgression. It would seem, that every man should die for his own iniquity, and that it should reach no further in justice. But consider, I pray you, the relation that Adam stood into, and in which he is here holden out as a figure of Christ. Adam, the first man, was a common person, representing all mankind, in whose happiness or misery all should share. God contracts with him on these terms, that his posterity's estate should depend on his behaviour. Now, if all mankind would have reaped the benefit and advantage of Adam's perseverance, if such an undeserved reward of eternal life would have redounded by the free promise unto them all, what iniquity is it that they also be sharers in his misery? Our stock and treasure was ventured in this vessel, and if we were to partake of its gain, why not of its loss? You see among men, children have one common lot with their parents. If the father be forfeited, the heirs suffer in it, and are cast out of the inheritance. It might appear a surer way to have the fortunes of all, so to speak, depend upon one, and their happiness assured unto them upon the standing of one, than to have every one left to himself, and his own well-being depending upon his own standing. As it is more likely one, and that the first one, shall not sin, than many; and especially when that one knew that the weight of all his posterity hung upon him, it might have made him very circumspect, knowing of how great moment his carriage was. But certainly we must look a little higher than such reasons; there was a glorious purpose of God's predominant in this, else there

was no natural necessity of imputing Adam's sin to the children not yet born, or propagating it to the children. He that brought a holy One and undefiled out of a virgin who was defiled, could have brought all others clean out of unclean parents. But there is a higher counsel about it. The Lord would have all men subject to his judgment,—all men once guilty, once in an equal state of misery, to illustrate that special grace shewed in Christ the more, and demonstrate his power and wrath upon others. That which concerns us most, is to believe this, that sin hath overspread all; and to have the lively impressions of this, were of more moment to true religion, than many discourses upon it. I had rather you went home not cursing Adam, or murmuring against the Most High, but bemoaning yourselves for your wretched estate, than be able to give reasons for the general imputation and propagation of sin. You all see it is, and therefore you should rather mourn for it, than ask why it is.

There is sin entered into the world by imputation, and also by propagation. Adam's first sin, and heinous transgression is charged upon all his posterity. and imputed unto them, "even unto them who have not sinned according to the similitude of Adam's transgression," that is, actually as he did. Infants, whom you call innocents, and indeed so they are in respect of you, who are come to age, yet they are guilty before God of that sin that ruined all. Now, that ye may know what you are, and what little reason you have to be pleased with yourselves, and absolve yourselves as ye do, I shall unbowel that iniquity unto you. First, There was in it an open banner displayed against God. When the sovereign Lord had enjoined his creature such a testimony of his homage and loyalty, and that so easy to be performed, and such as not a whit could abate from his happiness, what open rebellion was it to refuse it! It was a casting off the sovereign dominion of God, than which nothing can be more heinous, as if the clay should refuse to serve the potter's pleasure; and therefore it is eminently and signally styled

disobedience, as having nothing in it but the pure naked nature of disobedience; no difficulty to excuse it, for it was most easy; no pleasure to plead for it, for there were as good fruits beside, and a world of them; no necessity to extenuate it; so that you can see nothing in it, but the ugly face of disobedience and rebellion, ver. 19, whereby man draweth himself from his allegiance due to his Maker, and shaketh off the yoke in reproach of the Most High. Next, you may behold the vile and abominable face of ingratitude and unthankfulness in it; and truly heathens have so abhorred unthankfulness towards men, that they could not digest the reproach of it,—*Ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris:* if you call me unthankful, you may call me any thing, or all things. It is a compend of all vices. It is even iniquity grown to maturity and ripeness. But that such a fruit should grow out of such a holy and good soil, so well dressed and manured by the Lord, was a wonder. Lord, what was man that thou didst so magnify him, and make him a little lower than the angels? That thou didst put all things sublunary under his feet, and exalt him above them! For that creature, chosen and selected from among all, to be his minion, to stand in his presence, adorned and beautified with such gifts and graces, magnified with such glorious privileges, made according to the most excellent pattern, his own image, to forget all, and forget so soon; and when he had such a spacious garden to make use of, as is supposed to make up the third part of the earth, to eat of no fruit but that which was forbidden,—there is no such monstrous ingratitude can be imagined as here was acted. But then consider the two fountains from which this flowed, unbelief and pride, and you shall find it the heaviest sin in the world,—unbelief of his word and threatening. First he was brought to question it, and to doubt of it, and then to deny it. A word so solemnly and particularly told him by the truth itself, that ever a question of it could arise in his mind or get entry, what else was it than to impute iniquity to the holy One, and that iniquity or

falsehood and lying, which his nature most abhors? What was it but to blaspheme the most high and faithful God, by hearkening to the suggestions of his enemy, and credit them more than the threatenings of God,—to give the very flat contradiction to God,—we shall not die; and to assent so heartily to Satan's slanders and reproaches of God? And this unbelief opened a door to ambition and pride, the most sacrilegious ingredient of all, which is most opposite to God, and unto which he most opposed himself from the beginning: "You shall be like gods." Was he not happy enough already, and according to God's image? Nay, but this evil principle would arise up to the throne of God, and sit down in his stead. Pride hath atheism in it, to deny the true God, and yet would be a god itself. For the footstool to lift up itself thus, what an indignity was it! And indeed this wretched aim at so high an estate, hath thrown us down as low as hell. You see then how injurious this transgression was to God. There was disobedience and rebellion in it, which denies his dominion and supremacy; there was unthankfulness in it, denying his goodness and bounty; there was unbelief in it, contradicting his truth and faithfulness; and finally, pride, opposing itself to all that is in God, reaching up to his very crown of Majesty to take it off You see then what you are guilty of, in being guilty of Adam's transgression. Many of you flatter yourselves in your own eyes, that you have not done much evil, and you will justify yourselves in your comparisons with others. But I beseech you, consider this, though you had never done personally good or evil here, that which drowned the world in misery is your sin, and charged upon you. You are guilty of that which ruined all mankind, and makes the creation subject to vanity and corruption. O if ye believed this, you would find more need of the second Adam than you do! O how precious would his righteousness and obedience be to you, if you had rightly apprehended your interest in the first man's disobedience!

But besides this imputation, there is much more propagated unto all, and that is a total corruption and depravation of nature in soul and body, whereby man is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is truly and spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually, which is commonly called original sin;—a total averseness from God, and from all goodness, an antipathy against the ways of holiness, and a propension and strong impulse towards evil, even as a stone moves downwards. This poison and contagion of sin entering into the world, hath infected all, and gone through all the members. Neither is it any wonder that it is so, when this leprosy hath defiled the walls and roof of the house,—I mean, hath made the creation subject to vanity and corruption; it is no wonder that it spread abroad in his issue, and makes all unclean like himself. And truly this is it which most abases man's nature, and, being seen, would most humble men. Yea, till this be discerned, no man can be indeed humbled. He will never apprehend himself so bad as he is, but still imagine some excellency in himself, till he see himself in this glass. You talk of good natures, and good dispositions, "but in our flesh," saith the apostle, "dwells no good thing." The seeds of all wickedness are in every one of us, and it is the goodness of God for preserving of human society, that they are restrained and kept down in any from the grossest outbreakings. They know not themselves, who know any good of themselves, and they know not themselves, who either are in admiration at, or in bitterness or contempt against other sinners, whose sins are manifest to all. This were the only way to profit by looking on their evils, if we could straightway retire within and behold the root of that in ourselves, the fountain of it within us, and so grow in loathing, not of those persons, but of human nature, and in suitable thoughts of ourselves and others, and might wonder at the goodness and undeserved bounty of the Lord, that passes an act of restraint upon our corruption, and dams it up. Oh! that we could learn to loathe

ourselves in other men's evils? Thus we might reap good out of the evil, and prevent more in ourselves. But the looking upon gross provocations as singularities, makes them more general, because every man does not charge himself with the corruption that is in all these, but prefers himself to another. Therefore are reins loosed to corruption and a sluice opened, that it may come out,—that he who would not see his own image in another's face, may behold it in the glass of his own abominations. There is no point less believed than this, though generally confessed, that man is dead in sins and trespasses, and impotent to help himself. You will hardly take with wickedness when you confess weakness, as if nature were only sick, but not dead,—hurt, but not killed. Therefore it is that so many do abide in themselves, and, trusting to their own good purposes and resolutions and endeavours, do think to pacify God and help themselves out of their misery. But O look again, and look in upon yourselves in the glass of the word, and there is no doubt, but you will straightway be filled with confusion of face, and be altogether spoiled of good confidence and hope, as you call it. You will find yourself plunged in a pit of misery, and all strength gone, and none on the right hand or the left to help you; and then, and not till then, will the second Adam's hand, stretched out for help, be seasonable.

That which next follows is that which is the companion of sin inseparably,—"Death hath passed upon all," and that by sin. Adam's once disobedience opened a port [*i. e.* gate] for all sin to enter upon mankind, and sin cannot enter without this companion, death. Sin goes before, and death follows on the back of it, and these suit one another, as the work and the wages, as the tree and the fruit. They have a fitness one to another. Sowing to corruption reaps an answerable harvest, to wit, corruption. Sowing to the wind, and reaping the whirlwind, how suitable are they! That men may know how evil and bitter a thing sin is, he makes this the fruit of it in

his first law and sanction given out to men,—he joins them inseparably,—sin anddeath, sin and wrath, sin and a curse. By death is not only meant bodily death, which is the separation of the soul from the body, but first the spiritual death of the soul, consisting in a separation of the soul from God's blessed enlightening, enlivening, and comforting countenance. Man's true life, wherein he differs from beasts, consists in the right aspect of God upon his soul, —in his walking with God, and keeping communion with him. All things besides this, are but common and base, and this was cut off. His comfort, his joy and peace in God extinct, God became terrible to his conscience, and therefore man did flee and was afraid, when he heard his voice in the garden. Sin being interposed between God and the soul, cut off all the influence of heaven. Hence arises darkness of mind, hardness of heart, delusions, vile affections, horrors of conscience. Look what difference is between a living creature and a dead carcase, so much is between Adam's soul, upright, living in God, and Adam's soul separated from God by sin. Then upon the outward man the curse redounds. The body becomes mortal which had been incorruptible. It is now like a besieged city. Now some outer forts are gained by diseases, now by pains and torments, the outward walls of the body are at length overcome; and when life hath fled into a castle within the city, the heart, that is, last of all, besieged so straitly, and stormed so violently, that it must render unto death upon any terms. The body of man is even a seminary of a world of diseases and grievances, that if men could look upon it aright, they might see the sentence of death every day performed. Then how many evils in estate, in friends and relations, in employments, which being considered by heathens, hath made them praise the dead more than the living, but him not yet born most of all, because the present life is nothing else but a valley of misery and tears, a sea of troubles, where one wave continually prevents another, and comes on like Job's messengers; before one

speaks out his woful tidings, another comes with such like, or worse. But that which is the sum and accomplishment of God's curse and man's misery, is that death to come, eternal death, not death simply, but an "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power;"—an infinite loss, because the loss of such a glorious life in the enjoyment of God's presence; and an infinite hurt and torment beside, and both eternal. Now this is what we would lay before you,—you are under such a heavy sentence from the womb, a sentence of the Almighty, adjudging you for Adam's guilt and your own, to all the misery in this world and in the next; to all the treasures of wrath that are heaped up against the day of wrath; and strange it is, how we can live in peace, and not be troubled in mind, who have so great and formidable a party. Be persuaded, O be persuaded, that there shall not one jot of this be removed,—it must be fulfilled in you or your cautioner. And why then is a Saviour offered, a city of refuge opened, and secure sinners will not flee into it? But as for as many as have the inward dreadful apprehension of this wrath to come, and know not what to do, know, that to you is Jesus Christ preached, the second Adam, a quickening spirit, and in that consideration better than the first, not only a living soul himself, but a spirit to quicken you who are dead in sins, one who hath undertaken for you, and will hold you fast. Adam, who should have kept us, lost himself. Christ in a manner lost himself to save us; and as by Adam's disobedience all this sin and misery hath abounded on man, know, that the second Adam's obedience and righteousness are of greater virtue and efficacy to save, and instead of sin to restore righteousness, and instead of death to give life. Therefore you may come to him, and you shall be more surely kept than before.

XXV.

THE WAY OF MAN'S DELIVERY FROM DEATH.

1 Tim. i. 15.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Of all doctrines that ever were published to men, this contained here is the choicest, as you see the very preface prefixed to it imports. And truly, as it is the most excellent in itself, it could not but be sweet unto us, if we had received into the heart the belief of our own wretchedness and misery. I do not know a more sovereign cordial for a fainting soul, than this faithful saying, "That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." And therefore we are most willing to dwell on this subject, and to inculcate it often upon you, that without him you are undone and lost, and in him you may be saved. I profess, all other subjects, howsoever they might be more pleasing to some hearers, are unpleasant and unsavoury to me. This is, that we should once learn, and ever be learning—to know him that came to save us, and come to him.

We laboured to show unto you the state of sin and misery that Adam's first transgression hath subjected all mankind unto, which if it were really and truly apprehended, I do not think but it would make this saying welcome to your souls. Man being plunged into such a deep pit of misery, sin and death having overflowed the whole world, and this being seen and acknowledged by a sinner, certainly the next question in order of nature is this, Hath God left all to perish in this estate? Is there any remedy provided for sin and misery? And this will be indeed the query of a self-condemned sinner. Now there is a plank after this broken ship, there is an answer sweet and satisfactory to this question: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

We shall not expatiate into many notions about this, or multiply many branches of this. The matter is plain

and simple, and we desire to hold it out plainly and simply, that this is the remedy of sin and misery. When none could be found on the right hand or the left hand, here a Saviour from heaven comes down from above, whence no good could be expected, because a good God was provoked. "Can any good come out of Nazareth,"—that was a proverb concerning him. But I think in some sense it might be said, can any good come down from heaven, from his holy habitation to this accursed earth? Could any thing be expected from heaven but wrath and vengeance? And if no good could be expected that way, what way could it come? Sure if not from heaven, then from no airt [*i. e.* no other quarter.] Yet from heaven our help is come, from whence it could not be looked for,—even from him who was offended, and whose justice was engaged against man. That he might both satisfy justice and save man,—that he might not wrong himself nor destroy man utterly, he sends his only begotten Son, equal with himself in majesty and glory, into the world, in the state of a servant, to accomplish man's salvation, and perform to him satisfaction. Therefore Christ came into the world to save sinners.

There were two grand impediments in the way of man's salvation, which made it impossible to man; one is God's justice, another is man's sin. These two behoved to be satisfied or removed, ere there can be access to save a sinner. The sentence of divine justice is pronounced against all mankind, "death passed on all,"—a sentence of death and condemnation. Now, when the righteousness and faithfulness of God is engaged unto this, how strong a party do you think that must be? What power can break that prison of a divine curse, and take out a sinner from under justice-hand? Certainly there is no coming out till the uttermost farthing be paid that was owing, till complete satisfaction be given to all wrongs. Now, truly, the redemption of the soul had ceased for ever, (it is so precious that no creature can give any thing in exchange for it) except Jesus Christ had come into the world, one that

might be able to tread that wine-press of wrath alone, and give his life a ransom, in value far above the soul, and pay the debt of sin that we were owing to God. And, indeed, he was furnished for this purpose, a person suited and fitted for such a work;—a man, to undertake it in our name, and God, to perform it in his own strength;—a man, that he might be made under the law, and be humbled even to the death of the cross, that so he might obey the commandment, and suffer the punishment due to us,—and all this was elevated beyond the worth of created actions or sufferings, by that divine nature. This perfumed all his humanity, and all done by it, or in it. This puts the stamp of divinity upon all, and imposed an infinite value upon the coin of finite obedience and sufferings. And so in his own person, by coming into the world, and acting and suffering in the place of sinners, he hath taken the first great impediment out of the way; taken down the high wall of divine justice which had enclosed round about the sinner, and satisfied all its demands, by paying the price; so that there is nothing upon God's part to accuse or condemn, to hinder or obstruct salvation.

But then there is an inner wall, or dark dungeon of sin, into which the sinner is shut up, and reserved in chains of his own lusts, until the time of everlasting darkness; and when heaven is opened by Christ's death, yet this keeps a sinner from entering in. Therefore Jesus Christ, who came himself into the world to satisfy justice, and remove its plea, that there might be no obstruction from that airth, he sends out his powerful Spirit with the word, to deliver poor captive sinners, to break down the wall of ignorance and blindness, to cast down the high tower of wickedness and enmity against God, to take captive and chain our lusts, that kept us in bondage. And, as he made heaven accessible by his own personal obedience and sufferings, so he makes sinners ready and free to enter into that salvation by his Spirit's working in their persons. In the one, he had God, as it were, his party, and him he hath satisfied so far, that there was a voice came from

heaven to testify it, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and therefore, in testimony of it, God raised him from the dead. In the other, he hath Satan and man's wicked nature as his party, and these he must conquer and subdue. These he must overcome, ere we can be saved. A strange business indeed, and a great work, to bring two such opposite and distant parties together,—a holy and just God, and a sinful and rebellious creature, and to take them both as parties, that he might reconcile both.

Now, what do you think of this, my beloved, that such a glorious person is come down from heaven, for such a work as the salvation of sinners? I put no doubt, it would be most acceptable unto you, if you knew your misery, and knowing your misery, you could not but accept it, if you believed that it were true and faithful. I find one of these two the great obstruction in the way of souls receiving advantage by such glad tidings. Either the absolute necessity and excellency of the gospel is not considered, or the truth and reality of it is not believed. Men either do not behold the beauty of goodness in it, or do not see the light of truth in it. Either there is nothing discovered to engage their affections, or nothing seen to persuade their understandings. Therefore the apostle sounds a trumpet, as it were, in the entry, before the publication of these glad news, and commends this unto all men as a true and faithful saying, and as worthy of all acceptation. There is here the highest truth and certainty to satisfy the mind, "it is a faithful saying:" and there is here also the chiefest good to satiate the heart, "it is worthy of all acceptation." Now, if you do really apprehend your lost and miserable estate, you cannot but behold that ravishing goodness in it; and behold that you cannot, till you see the other first. Whence is it, I pray you, that so many souls are never stirred with the proposition of such things in the gospel, that the riches and beauty of salvation in Jesus Christ doth not once move them? Is it not because there is no lively apprehension of their misery without him?

THE

SINNER'S SANCTUARY;

OR,

A DISCOVERY MADE OF THOSE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES OFFERED UNTO THE PENITENT AND FAITHFUL UNDER THE GOSPEL:

BEING

FORTY-EIGHT SERMONS

ON THE

EIGHTH CHAPTER OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

SERMONS.

I.

Rom. viii. 1.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

THERE are three things which concur to make man miserable,—sin, condemnation, and affliction. Every one may observe, "that man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" that his days here are few and evil;—"he possesses months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed for him," Job v. 6, 7; vii. 3. "He is of few days and full of trouble," Job xiv. 1. Heathens have had many meditations of the misery of man's life; and in this have outstripped the most part of Christians. We recount, amongst our miseries, only some afflictions and troubles, as poverty, sickness, reproach, banishment, and such like. They again have numbered even those natural necessities of men amongst his miseries,—to be continually turned about, in such a circle of eating, drinking, and sleeping. What burden should it be to an immortal spirit to roll about perpetually that wheel! We make more of the body than of the soul. They have accounted this body a burden to the soul. They placed posterity, honour, pleasure, and such things, which men pour out their souls upon, amongst the greatest miseries of men, as vanity in themselves, and vexation, both in the enjoying and losing of them; but, alas! they knew not the fountain of all this misery,—sin; and the accomplishment of this misery,—condemnation. They thought trouble came out of

the ground and dust, either by a natural necessity, or by chance; but the word of God discovereth unto us the ground of it, and the end of it. The ground and beginning of it was man's defection from God, and walking according to the flesh; and from this head have all the calamities and streams of miseries in the world issued. It hath not only redounded to men, but even to the whole creation, and subjected it to vanity, ver. 20 of this chapter. Not only shalt thou, O man, (saith the Lord to Adam) eat thy meat in sorrow, but thy curse is upon the ground also, and thou who wast immortal, shalt return to that dust which thou magnifiedst above thy soul, Gen. iii. 17. But the end of it is suitable to the beginning. The beginning had all the evil of sin in it, and the end hath all the evil of punishment in it. These streams of this life's misery, they run into an infinite, boundless, and bottomless ocean of eternal wrath. If thou live according to the flesh, thou shalt die: it is not only death here, but eternal death after this. The miseries then of this present life, are not a proportionable punishment of sin; they are but an earnest given of that great sum, which is to be paid in the day of accounts; and that is condemnation, "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." Now, as the law discovers the perfect misery of mankind, so the gospel hath brought to light a perfect remedy of all this misery. Jesus Christ was manifested to take away sin, and therefore his name is Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins." This is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Judgment was by one unto condemnation of all, but now "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" so these two evils are removed, which indeed have all evil in them. He takes away the curse of the law, being made under it; and then he takes away the sin against the law by his holy Spirit. He hath a twofold virtue, for he came by blood and water, 1 John v. 6, 7,—by blood, to cleanse away the guilt of sin; and by water, to purify us from sin itself. But in the meantime,

there are many afflictions and miseries upon us, common to men: why are not these removed by Christ? I say, the evil of them is taken away, though themselves remain. Death is not taken away, but the sting of death is removed. Death, afflictions, and all, are overcome by Jesus Christ, and so made his servants to do us good. The evil of them is God's wrath and sin, and these are removed by Jesus Christ. Now they would be taken away indeed, if it were not good they remained, for "all things work together for the good of those that love God," ver. 28. So then we have a most complete deliverance in extent, but not in degree. Sin remains in us, but not in dominion and power. Wrath sometimes kindles because of sin, but it cannot encrease to everlasting burnings. Afflictions and miseries may change their name, and be called instructions and trials,—good, and not evil: but Christ hath reserved the full and perfect delivery till another day, which is therefore called "the day of complete redemption," and then all sin, all wrath, all misery shall have an end, and "be swallowed up of life and immortality," ver. 23.

This is the sum of the gospel; and this is the substance of this chapter. There is a threefold consolation answerable to our threefold evils: "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ." Here is a blessed message to condemned lost sinners, who have that sentence within their breasts, ver. 1. This was the end of Christ's coming and dying, that he might deliver us from sin as well as death, and the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us; and therefore he hath given the holy Spirit, and dwells in us by the Spirit, to quicken us who are "dead in sins and trespasses." O what consolation will this be to souls, that look upon the body of death within them, as the greatest misery, and do groan with Paul, "O miserable man that I am!" &c., Rom. vii. 24. This is held forth to ver. 17. But because there are many grounds of heaviness and sadness in this world, therefore the gospel opposes unto all these, both our expectation which we

have of that blessed hope to come, whereof we are so sure, that nothing can frustrate us of it, and also the help we get in the meantime of the Spirit to bear our infirmities, and to bring all things about for good to us, ver. 28. And from all this the believer in Jesus Christ hath ground of triumph and boasting before the perfect victory,—even as Paul doth in the name of believers, from ver. 31 to the end. Upon these considerations, he that cried out not long ago, "O miserable man, who shall deliver me?" doth now cry out, "who shall condemn me?" The distressed wrestler becomes a victorious triumpher; the beaten soldier becomes more than a conqueror. Oh, that your hearts could be persuaded to hearken to this joyful sound!—to embrace Jesus Christ for grace and salvation; how quickly would a song of triumph in him swallow up all your present complaints and lamentations!

All the complaints amongst men may be reduced to one of these three. I hear the most part bemoaning themselves thus; alas for the miseries of this life, this evil world! alas for poverty, for contempt, for sickness! Oh! miserable man that I am, who will take this disease away? Who will shew me any good thing? Psal. iv. any temporal good? But if ye knew and considered your latter end, ye would cry out more; ye would refuse to be comforted, though these miseries were removed. But I hear some bemoaning themselves more sadly,—they have heard the law, and the sentence of condemnation is within them. The law hath entered and killed them. Oh! "what shall I do to be saved?" "Who will deliver me from the wrath to come?" What is all present afflictions and miseries in respect of eternity? Yet there is one moan and lamentation beyond all these, when the soul finds the sentence of absolution in Jesus Christ, and gets its eyes opened to see that body of death and sin within, that perfect man of sin diffused throughout all the members. Then it bemoans itself with Paul—"O miserable man, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. vii. 24. I am delivered from the condemnation of

the law, but what comfort is it, as long as sin is so powerful in me? Nay, this makes me often suspect my delivery from wrath and the curse, seeing sin itself is not taken away.

Now, if you could be persuaded to hearken to Jesus Christ, and embrace this gospel, O what abundant consolation should ye have! What a perfect answer to all your complaints? They would be swallowed up in such a triumph as Paul's is here. This would discover unto you a perfect remedy of sin and misery, that ye should complain no more; or at least, no more as those without hope. You shall never have a remedy of your temporal miseries, unless ye begin at eternal, to prevent them. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you." Seek first to flee from the wrath to come, and ye shall escape it; and beside, the evil of time afflictions shall be removed. First remove the greatest complaints of sin and condemnation, and how easy is it to answer all the lamentations of this life, and make you rejoice in the midst of them!

You have in this verse three things of great importance to consider,—the great and gracious privilege, the true nature, and the special property of a Christian. The privilege is one of the greatest in the world, because it is of eternal consequence, and soul concernment; the nature is most divine,—he is one that is in Jesus Christ, and implanted in him by faith; his distinguishing property is noble, suitable to his nature and privileges,—he walks not as the world, according to his base flesh, but according to the Spirit. All these three are of one latitude,—none of them reaches further than another. That rich privilege and sweet property concentres and meets together in one man, even in the man who is in Jesus Christ. Whoever enters into Jesus Christ, and abideth in him, he meets with these two, justification and sanctification; these are no where else, and they are there together.

If ye knew the nature and properties of a Christian, ye

would fall in love with these for themselves; but if these for your own sakes will not allure you, consider this incomparable privilege that he hath beyond all others, that ye may fall in love with the nature of a Christian. Let this love of yourselves and your own well-being, pursue you into Jesus Christ, that ye may walk even as he walked; and I assure you, if ye were once in Christ Jesus, ye would love the very nature and walking of a Christian, no more for the absolution and salvation that accompanies it, but for its own sweetness and excellency beyond all other. Ye would, as the people of Samaria, no more believe for the report of your own necessity and misery, but ye would believe in Jesus Christ, and walk according to the Spirit, for their own testimony they have in your consciences. Ye would no more be allured only with the privileges of it to embrace Christianity, but you would think Christianity the greatest privilege, a reward unto itself. *Pietas ipsa sib imerces est,*—godliness is great gain in itself, though it had not such sweet consequents or companions. That you may know this privilege, consider the estate all men are into by nature. Paul expresses it in short, Rom. v. "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all unto condemnation;" and the reason of this is, "by one man sin came upon all, and so death by sin, for death passed upon all, because all have sinned," ver. 18, 12. Lo, then, all men are under a sentence of condemnation once! This sentence is the curse of the law,—"Cursed is every one that abideth not in all things commanded to do them." If you knew what this curse were, ye would indeed think it a privilege to be delivered from it. Sin is of an infinite deserving, because against an infinite God; it is an offence of an infinite majesty, and therefore the curse upon the sinner involves eternal punishment. O what weight is in that word, 2 Thess. i. 9, "Ye shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power!" If it were duly apprehended, it would weigh down a man's soul, and make it heavy unto death. This

condemnation includes both *damnum et pœnam, pœnam damni et pœnam sensus;* and both are infinite in themselves, and eternal in their continuance. What an unpleasant and bitter life would one lead, that were born to a kingdom, and yet to be banished it and lose it? But what an incomparable loss is it, to fall from an heavenly kingdom, which heart cannot conceive, and that for ever? "In God's favour is life, and in his presence are rivers of pleasures for evermore." When your petty penny-losses do so much afflict your spirits, what would the due apprehension of so great a loss do? Would it not be death unto you, and worse than death, to be separated from this life; to be eternally banished from the presence of his glory? If there should be no more punishment but this only; if the wicked were to endure for ever on earth, and the godly, whom they despised and mocked, were translated to heaven, what torment would it be to your souls to think upon that blessedness which they enjoy above, and how foolishly ye have been put by it for a thing of no value? What would a rich man's advantages and gains be to him, when he considereth what an infinite loser he is? How he hath sold a kingdom for a dunghill? Now if there were any hope, that after some years his banishment from heaven might end, this might refresh him, but there is not one drop of such consolation. He is banished, and eternally banished, from that glorious life in the presence of God, which those do enjoy whom he despised. If a man were shut up all his life-time in a pit, never to see the light once more, would not this be torment enough to him? But when withal there is such pain joined with this loss; when all this time he is tormented within with a gnawing worm, and without with fire;—those senses that did so greedily hunt after satisfaction to themselves, are now as sensible in the feeling of pain and torment. And when this shall not make an end, but be eternal, O whose heart can consider it! It is the comfort and ease of bodily torments here, that they will end in death. Destruction destroys itself, in destroy-

ing the body; but here is an immortal soul to feed upon, and at length the body shall be immortal. That destruction cannot quite destroy it, but shall be an everlasting destruction and living death.

This is the sentence that is once past against us all in the word of God, and not one jot of this word shall fall to the ground: heaven and earth may fail sooner. Ye would think it were an irrepealable decree, if all the nations in the earth, and angels above, convened to adjudge a man to death, did pass sentence upon him. Nay, but this word that is daily spoken to you, which passeth this sentence upon you all, is more certain: and this sentence of death must be executed, unless ye be under that blessed exception made here and elsewhere in the gospel. I beseech you, consider what it is to have such a judge condemning you. Would not any of you be afraid, if ye were under the sentence of a king? If that judgment were above your head, who of you would sit in peace and quietness? Who would not flee from the wrath of a king, that is like the roaring of a lion? But there is a sentence of the KING of kings and nations above your heads. Who would not fear thee, to whom it doth appertain, O King of nations? It is not a great man that can destroy the body, that is against thee; it is not he who hath power to kill thee, and he hath also a great desire so to do. This were indeed much; but it is the great and eternal JEHOVAH, "who lifts up his hand to heaven and swears he lives for ever,"—he is against thee. He who hath all power over body and soul, is against thee, and so is obliged to improve his omnipotency against thee; "he can kill both soul and body, and cast them into hell," and by virtue of this curse he will not spare thee, but pour out all the curses in this book. Thou wouldst be at no peace if thou wert declared rebel by the king and parliament; but alas! that is a small thing. They can but reach thy body, nay, neither can they always do that; thou mayest flee from them, but whither canst thou flee from him? Thou canst not go out of his dominions, for the earth is

his, and the sea, and all that therein is. Darkness cannot hide thee from him. He may spare long, because he can certainly overtake when he pleases; men may not, because they have no assurance of finding. I beseech you then, consider this. It is of soul consequence; and "what hath a man gained, if he gain the world, and lose his soul?" If the gainer be lost, what is gained? And it is of eternal consequence; and what are many thousand years to this? You can look beyond all these, and might comfort yourselves in hope; but you cannot see to the end of this. There is still more before than is past; nay, there is nothing past,—it is still as beginning.

O that ye would consider this curse of God that stands registrate upon us all? What effects had it on Christ, when he did bear it? It made his soul heavy to death:—it was a cup that he could scarcely drink. He that supported the frame of this world was almost near succumbing under the weight of this wrath. It made him sweat blood in the garden. He that could do all things, and speak all things, was put to this, "What shall I say?" When this condemnation was so terrible to him, who was that Mighty One upon whom all help was laid, what shall it be to you? No man's sorrow was ever like his, nor pain ever like his, if all the scattered torments were united in one; but because he was God he overcame, and came out from under it. But what do you think shall be the estate of those who shall endure that same torment?—and not for three days, or three years, or some thousands of years, but beyond imagination,—to all eternity?

I beseech you consider this condemnation which ye are adjudged unto, and do not lie under it. Do ye think ye can endure what Christ endured? Do ye think ye can bear wrath according to God's power and justice? And yet the judgment [illegible] me upon all men to this condemnation. But, alas! who fears him according to his wrath? Who knows the power of his anger? Ye sleep secure, as if all matters were past and over your head. We declare unto you in the Lord's name, that this condemnation is yet

above you, because you have not judged yourselves. It is preached unto you that ye may flee from it; but since ye will not condemn yourselves, this righteous judge must condemn you.

Now, since it is so, that such a condemnatory sentence is passed on all men, what a privilege must it be, to be delivered from it,—to have that sentence repealed by some new act of God's mercy and favour? David proclaims him a blessed man, whose sins are forgiven and covered; and indeed he is blessed who escapes that pit of eternal misery, though there were no more. Though there were no title to an inheritance and kingdom above, to be delivered from that wrath to come upon the children of disobedience, this is more happiness than the enjoyment of all earthly delights. "What would a man give in exchange for his soul? Skin for skin, and all that a man hath he will give for his life." These riches and advantages, and pleasures that men spend their labour for, all these they will part with in such a hazard. The covetous man he will cast his coffers overboard ere he lose his life; the voluptuous man he will suffer pain and torment in cutting off a member, ere he die. But if men knew their souls, and what an immortality and eternity expects them, they would not only give skin for skin, and all that they have, for their soul, but their life also. Ye would chuse to die a thousand deaths to escape this eternal death. But "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. xvi. 26;—though he would give, yet what hath he to give? There are two things endear any privilege to us, and heighten the rate of it; and these two are eminent here. Is it not necessary to be, to live, and have a being? All men think so, when they will give all they have to redeem themselves. All other things are accidental to them, they are nearest to themselves; therefore all must go ere themselves go. But I say this is more necessary,—to be well eternally, than to be simply; to escape this condemnation, than to have a being. And this shall be verified in the last day, when men shall cry for hills and mountains to fall on them,

and save them from the wrath of the Lamb, Rev. vi. 16. Men will chuse rather not to be, than to fall in that wrath. O how acceptable would a man's first nothing be to him in that great day of wrath! Who shall be able to stand in it?—when kings and princes, bond and free, great and small, shall desire mountains to grind them into powder, rather than to hear that sentence of condemnation, and yet shall not obtain it. O blessed are all they that trust in him, "when his wrath is kindled but a little," Psal. ii. 12. Ye toil and vex yourselves, and spend your time about that body and life; but for as precious as they are to you now, ye would exchange them one day for immunity and freedom from this wrath and curse. How will that man think "his lines are fallen in pleasant places!" How will he despise the glory of earthly kingdoms, though all united in one! Who considers in his heart how all kings, all tongues and nations, must stand before the judgment-seat of God, and the books of his law be opened, to judge them by, as also the books of their consciences, to verify his accusation, and precipitate their own sentence? And then, in the open view of all the sons of Adam, and the angels, all secrets shall be brought out,—their accusation read as large as their life-time, and as many curses be pronounced against every one, as there be breaches of the law of God, whereof they are found guilty; and then all these will seek into corners, and cry for mountains, but there is no covering from his presence. What do ye think the man will think within himself who will stand before God, and be absolved in judgment by Jesus Christ, notwithstanding his provocations above many of them? What will a king then think of his crown and dominions, when he reflects on them? What will the poor persecuted Christian then think of all the glory and perfection of this world, when he looks back upon it? O know, poor foolish men, what madness is in venturing your souls for trifles! Ye run the hazard of all greatest things for a poor moment's satisfaction. Ye will repent it too late, and become wise to judge yourselves fools, when there is no place to mend it.

But this privilege is no more necessary than it is precious. Your souls are now kept captive under that sentence of everlasting imprisonment. Ye are all prisoners, and know not of it. What will ye give in ransom for your souls? Your sins and iniquities have sold you to the righteous Judge of all the earth, as malefactors, and he hath passed a sentence of your perpetual imprisonment under Satan's custody in hell. Now what will you give to redeem your souls from that pit? How few know the worth of their souls!—And so they offer unto God some of their riches for them. Doth not many of you think ye have satisfied for sins, if ye pay a civil penalty to the judge? Many think their own tears and sorrow for sin may be a price to justice, at least if it be joined with amendment in time coming. And so men conceive their sins are pardoned, and their souls redeemed. But, alas! the redemption of the soul is precious, yea, it ceaseth for ever; all your substance will be utterly contemned, though ye offered it. How few of you would give so much for your souls! And yet though ye give it, it will not do it,—ye must pay the uttermost farthing, or nothing. Your sorrow and reformations will not complete the sum, no, nor begin it. "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take much soap, yet is thine iniquity marked with me,"—yet there is still condemnation for thee. Though all the world should convene about this matter, to find a ransom for man; suppose all the treasures of monarchs, the mines and bowels of the earth, the coffers of rich men, were searched; nay, that the earth, the sea, the heavens, and sun, and moon be prized at the highest;—join all the merits of angels above and men below, all their good actions and sufferings, yet the sum that amounts of all that addition, would not pay the least farthing of this debt. The earth would say, it is not in me; the heaven behoved to answer so; angels and men might say, we have heard of it, but it is hid from all living. Where then is this redemption from the curse? Where shall a ransom be found? Indeed God hath found it; it is with him. He hath given

his Son a ransom for many, and his blood is more precious than souls,—let be gold and silver. Is not this then a great privilege, that if all the kingdoms of the world were sold at the dearest, yet they could not buy it? What a jewel is this! What a pearl! Whoever of you have escaped this wrath, consider what is your advantage. O consider your dignity ye are advanced unto, that you may engage your hearts to him, to become his, and his wholly! for "you are bought with a price;" and are no more your own; he gave himself for you, and was made a curse to redeem you from the curse. O how should you walk as privileged men, as redeemed ones!

I beseech you all to call home your thoughts to consider and ponder on this sentence that is passed against us. There is now hope of delivery from it, if ye will take it home unto you; but if ye will still continue in the ways of sin, without returning, know this, that ye are but multiplying those curses, platting many cords of your iniquities, to bind you in everlasting chains. Ye are but digging a pit for your souls, ye that sweat in your sins, and travel in them, and will not embrace this ransom offered. The key and lock of that pit is eternal despair. O consider how quickly your pleasures and gains will end, and spare some of your thoughts from present things, to give them to eternity, that thread spun out for ever and ever; —the very length of the days of the Ancient of days, who hath no beginning of days nor end of time! Remember now of it, lest ye become as long miserable as God is blessed, and that is for ever.

All men would desire to have privileges beyond others, but there is one that carries it away from all the world, and that is the believer in Jesus Christ, who is said to be in Christ, implanted in him by faith, as a lively member of that body whereof Christ is the head. Christ Jesus is the head of that body, the church; and this head communicates life unto all the members, for "he fills all in all." There is a mighty working power in the head, which diffuseth itself throughout the members, Eph. i. 19,

22, 23. There are many expressions of union between Christ and believers. There is no near conjunction among men, but this spiritual union of Christ with believers is represented to us under it. The foundation and the building have a near dependence, the corner-stone and the wall—these knit together; and "Christ Jesus is the foundation and the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly joined together, groweth up into a holy temple," Eph. ii. 20, 21. The head and members are near united, so is Christ and believers; they "grow up unto him," Eph. iv. 15. Parents and children are almost one, so is Christ Jesus the everlasting Father, and he shews to the Father the children which he hath given him. We are his brethren, and he is not ashamed to call us so; but, which is more, we are one flesh with him. There is a marriage between Christ and the church, and this is the great mediation of the song of Solomon. "He is the vine-tree, and we are branches" planted in him. Nay, this union is so strict, that it is mutual, "I in them, and they in me." Christ dwelleth in us by faith, by making us to believe in him, and love him; we dwell in Christ by that same faith and love, by believing in him, and loving him. Christ Jesus is our house where we get all our furniture; he is our store-house and treasure, our place of strength and pleasure, a city of refuge, a strong tower and a pleasant river to refresh us. We again are his habitation where he dwelleth by his Spirit; we are his work-house, where he works all his curious pieces of the new creature, forming it unto the day of his espousals, the great day of redemption.

This gives us to understand what we once were. We may stand here and look back upon our former condition, and find matter both of delight and sorrow. We were once without Christ in the world, and if without Christ, then "without God and hope in the world," Eph. ii. 12. I wish this were engraven on the hearts of men, that they are born out of Christ Jesus; wild olives, growing up in the stock of degenerated Adam. He was once planted a

noble vine, but how quickly turned he into a degenerated plant, and instead of grapes, brought forth wild grapes, and sour. We all grow upon an "olive tree that is wild by nature," Rom. xi. 24. It grows out of the garden of God, in the barren wilderness, and is meet for nothing but to bring forth fruit unto death, to be cut down and cast into the fire. It is a tree which the Lord hath cursed,—never more fruit grow upon thee henceforth: this was the fatal sentence pronounced on Adam. O that you would know your condition by nature! how all your good inclinations, dispositions, and educations, cannot make your stock good, and your fruit good! "Ephraim is an empty vine,"—this is our name. Nay, but many think they bring forth fruit. Hath not heathens spread forth their branches, and brought forth many pleasant fruits of temporal patience, sobriety, magnanimity, prudence, and such like? Do not some civil men many acts of civility profitable to men? Doth not many a man pray, and read the Scriptures from his youth up? Yes, indeed, these are fruits, but for all that, he is an empty vine, for "he brings forth fruit to himself;" and so, as in the original, he is a vine emptying the fruit which it gives, Hos. x. 1. All these fruits are but to himself, and from himself; he knows not to direct those to God's glory, but to his own praise or advantage, to make them his ornament and he knows not his own emptiness, to seek all his furniture and sap from another. What were all these fair blossoms and fruits of heathens? Indeed they were more and better than any now upon the multitude of professed Christians: and yet these were but *splendida peccata*, shining sins. What is all your praying and fasting, but to yourselves, as the Lord charges the people, Zech. vii. "Do you fast at all to me?" No, "ye do it to yourselves." Here is the wildness and degenerateness of your natures. Either you bring forth very bitter fruits, such as intemperance, avarice, contention, swearing, &c., or else fruits that have nothing but a fair skin, like apples of Sodom, that are beautiful on the tree, but, being handled, turn to ashes; so

there is nothing of them from God, or to God. I think every man almost entertains this secret persuasion in his breast,—that his nature may be weak, yet it is not wicked; it may be helped with education, and care and diligence, and dressed till it please God, and profit others. Who is persuaded in heart that he is an enemy to God, and cannot be subject to God's law? Who believes that his "heart is desperately wicked?" Oh! it is indeed "deceitful above all things," and in this most deceitful, that it persuades you ye have a good heart to God. Will not profane men, whose hands are defiled, maintain the uprightness of their hearts? *Nemo nascitur bonus sed fit.* I beseech you once, consider that ye are born out of Christ Jesus. Ye conceive that ye are born and educated Christians;—ye have that name indeed from infancy, and are baptized. But I ask about the thing; baptism of water doth not implant you into Jesus Christ. Nay, it declares this much unto you, that by nature ye are far off from Jesus, and wholly defiled,—all your imaginations only evil. Now, I beseech you, how came the change? Or is there a change? Are not the most part of men the old men;—no new creatures? "He that is in Christ is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 16. Ye have now Adam's nature, which ye had first. Ye have borne the image of the earthly, and are ye not such yet, who are still earthly? Think ye that ye can inherit the kingdom of God thus? Can ye pass over from a state of condemnation to a state of life and no condemnation, without a change? No, believe it, ye cannot inherit incorruption with flesh and blood, which ye were born with. Ye must be implanted in the second Adam, and bear his image, ere ye can say that ye are partakers of his blessings, 1 Cor. xv. 47, 48, 49, &c. Now I may pose your consciences,—how many of you are changed? Are not the most part of you even such as ye were from your childhood? Be not deceived; ye are yet strangers from the promises of God, and without this hope in the world.

II.

Verse 1.—There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, &c.

All "the promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus;" they meet all in him, and from him are derived unto us. When man was in integrity, he was with God, and in God, and that immediately, without the intervention of a Mediator. But our falling from God hath made us without God; and the distance is so great, as Abraham speaks to the rich man, that "neither can those above go down to him, nor he come up to them." There is a gulf of separation between God and us, that there can be no meeting. And so we who are "without God, are without hope in the world," Eph. ii. 12; no hope of any more access to God as before. The tree of life is compassed about with a flaming fire and a sword. God is become a consuming fire unto us, that none can come near these everlasting burnings, much less dwell with them. Since there can be no meeting so, God hath found out the way how sinners may come to him, and not be consumed. He will meet with us in Jesus Christ, that living temple, and this is the trysting-place.* There was a necessity of this Mediator, to take up the difference, and make a bridge over that gulf of separation, for us to come to God; and this is his human nature, "the new and living way, the vail of his flesh. God is in Christ, therefore, reconciling the world to himself." All the light of consolation and salvation that is from God, is all embodied in this Sun of Righteousness. All the streams of grace and mercy run in the channel of his well-beloved Son. It follows then, that God is not to be found out of Jesus Christ; and

* A *trysting-place*—a place where two or more parties have agreed to meet for the purpose of transacting some common business.

whoever is "without Christ, is without God in the world." God is in Christ reconciling the world, and "there is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ;" but God out of Christ is condemning the world, and therefore condemnation is to all that are not in Christ. When all the sons of Adam were declared rebels, because of his and their own rebellion, the Lord hath appointed a city of refuge, that whosoever is pursued by the avenger of blood, may enter into it, and get protection and safety. Without is nothing but the sword of the avenger, justice reigning in all the world beside; within this city, justice may not enter to take out any into condemnation. And therefore those souls that flee for refuge, "to lay hold on the hope set before them" in Jesus Christ; justice may pursue them to the ports of this city, condemnation may follow them hard, till they enter in; but these may not enter into the ports [*i. e.* gates] of the city. What a miserable estate then are these souls in, that lie in their own natures, in the open fields without this city! How many foolish men apprehend no danger, but sport about the ports of the city of refuge, and will not enter in! O the avenger of blood shall be upon thee ere thou know; and if it find thee out of the city, woe unto thee! All thy prayers and entreaties will not prevail. Justice is blind and deaf,—cannot deal partially, or respect persons, cannot hear thy supplications. It is strange, that men are taken up with other petty inconsiderable things, and yet neglect to know what this is, to be in Jesus Christ, upon which their salvation depends

Faith in Jesus Christ is the soul's flight into the city of refuge. Now none flieth but when they apprehend danger, or are pursued. This danger that a soul apprehends, is perishing and condemnation for ever. The pursuer is the law of God, and his justice; these have a sword in their hand, the curse of God, and the sentence of condemnation. God erects a tribunal in his word, wherein he judgeth men. Whosoever he hath a purpose of goodwill unto, he makes the law to enter into their con-

sciences, that the offence may abound. He sends out some messenger of affliction, or conviction, to bring them before the judgment seat, and hear their accusation read unto them. There the soul stands trembling, and the conscience witnesseth and approveth all that the word challengeth of; so that the sinner's mouth is stopped, and can have no excuse to this accusation. Then the judge pronounces the sentence upon the guilty person, "Cursed is every one that abideth not in all things," &c. The soul cries, Guilty, O Lord, guilty, I deserve the curse indeed: Oh! "what shall I do to be saved?" Then the soul looks about on the right hand, and on the left hand, to seek some refuge, but there is none. Whither shall he go from him? He looks within himself, and beholds nothing within; but the accusing witnessing conscience becomes a tormenter. The fire is kindled within, which feeds upon the fuel of innumerable sins. Now the soul is almost overwhelmed, and spies if there be any place to fly from itself, and from that wrath, and behold the Lord discovers a city of refuge near hand, where no condemnation is, even Christ Jesus, who hath sustained the curse, that he might redeem us from it. The vision of peace is here, and thither the soul flies out of itself, and from justice, into that discovered righteousness of Christ's, and so the more that the offence abounded, now the more hath grace superabounded; so that "there is now no more condemnation" to him.

I beseech you consider this, and let it be written on the table of your hearts. There are two tribunals that God sits upon, one out of Christ Jesus, another in Christ Jesus. There is a throne of justice, where no sentence passes but pure unmixed justice, without any temperament of mercy; and this all men must once compear before. You know what a covenant of works God once made with us,—If thou do these things thou shalt live, if not, thou shalt die the death. According to this we must once be judged, that justice suffer no prejudice. Therefore God speaks out of his law, upon this throne, the

language of mount Sinai; he reads our charge unto us, and because all the world is guilty, therefore the sentence of death is once passed upon all. Now, whoever of you come before this tribunal to be judged, know that it is a subordinate court; there is a higher court of mercy and judgment, both justice and mercy mixed together. Though mercy be the predominant, justice and judgment is the habitation of it, but mercy and truth go before the judge's face, and come nearest sinners to give them access. And this you may appeal unto from that tribunal of justice. "But there is forgiveness with thee," &c. Psal. cxxx. 4, 5. And whoever comes here, Christ Jesus sits on this throne to absolve him from that sentence. If you ask what equity is in it, is not this a prejudice to justice, and an abomination to the Lord, to justify the wicked and ungodly sinner? I say, it is no iniquity, because Jesus Christ hath paid the price for us, and was made a curse for our sins, that we might be the righteousness of God in him; and therefore it is just with God to forgive sins; to relax that sinner from the condemnation of the law, that flies into Jesus Christ. You may answer justice—I will not take this for God's last word, I hear that all final judgment is committed to the Son, that he may give life to whom he will; he calls me, and to him will I go, for he hath the words of eternal life; he will justify, and who shall condemn?

Now, if any man will not now arraign himself before the tribunal of God's justice; if he will not search his guiltiness till his mouth be stopped, and hear his sentence of condemnation read, and take with it,—that man cannot come to Jesus Christ, to be absolved, for he justifieth none but self-condemned and lost sinners. So your day is but yet coming, when you must answer to justice. The tribunal of mercy shall be removed, and Christ shall sit upon a throne of pure justice, to judge those who judged not themselves. Alas for your loss, the most part of you! I pity you. You live in great peace and quietness without the ports of the city of refuge. We declare

unto you in the Lord's name, you are under the curse of God: will you yet sit secure, and put the evil day far from you? Oh! rather trouble your peace for a season, with the consideration of your sins! Enter into judgment with yourselves till you see nothing but perishing in yourselves;—and there is no hazard, because salvation is brought near in the gospel. If you would not trouble yourselves so much as to judge yourselves, then you shall be judged when there is no Mediator to plead for you, none to appeal unto.

But whosoever take the sentence of condemnation unto them, and subscribe to the righteousness of the Lord's curse upon them, we do invite all such in the Lord's name, to come in hither, even to Jesus Christ. There is no condemnation to them that are in him. If you stand scrupulous, making many questions in such a matter of so great necessity, you wrong your own soul and dishonour him. Know this, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Therefore thou condemned sinner mayest come to God in Christ. If you ask any warrant, we think there should be no such questioning, when you are in so great necessity. If a man were starving without a city, and it were told him there is plenty within, were he not a fool that would make any more business, but labour to enter in? This is enough to cross all your objections; you are in extreme necessity, and like to perish within yourself; "he is able to save to the utmost all that come to him." What would you more? Let there be then a closure between absolute necessity and sufficient ability to save. Will you yet stand disputing without the city, when the avenger of blood is above your head? If you will yet press for some more ground and warrant of believing,—then I will tell you all that I know is in the word for a ground of faith. You have great misery and necessity within you,—that you grant, and it is your complaint. Christ hath mercy and sufficiency of grace in him; "he is able to save to the utmost,"—that you cannot deny. But I do add this third, he is also will-

ing to save thee, whoever will be saved by him; nay, he is more willing than thou art. If you question this, I desire you but to consider the whole tenor of the gospel. How many invitations? How many persuasions? How many promises to those who come? Yea, how many commands, and that peremptory, to believe on him? Yea, how many threatenings against you, if you will not come to him to have life? Hath he given himself for the sins of the world, and will he not be willing that sinners partake of that he was at so much pains to purchase? Think you that Christ will be content his death should be in vain? And it should be in vain, if he did not welcome the worst sinners; yea, it should be in vain if he did not draw them to him, and make them willing. But besides this, he hath promised so absolutely and freely, and fully, as there should be no exception imaginable against it; "him that cometh, I will not in any case cast out." John vi. 37. Why do you imagine any case where Christ hath made none? Why do you sin against your own souls? Oh, if I were in Christ, say you, I would be well! and oh, that he would welcome such a sinner! Christ answers thee in express terms; "whosoever will, let him take and drink freely." Thou declarest thy willingness in so speaking; and he declares his willingness in so promising. Nay, thy looking afar off on him, is a fruit of his willingness; "ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and loved you first." If ye will not yet believe this, look upon his command; "this is his command, that ye believe on the Son," 1 John iii. 23. What warrant have ye to do any duty he commands? And why do ye more question this? Is not this his command? And is it not more peremptory, because a new command, and his last command? And when withal he boasts us into his Son, that ye may have life, oh, who should have the face to question any more his willingness! Other grounds than these I know none; and I think if any come to Christ, or pretend to come, on other grounds, he comes not right. If the most holy man comes not in among

ungodly sinners; if he does not walk upon the grounds of his own extreme necessity, and Christ's sufficiency, he cannot come to Jesus Christ. There is a conceit among people, which, if it were not so common as it is, I would not mention it, it is so ridiculous;—how can I come to Christ so unclean and so guilty, nothing but condemnation in me? If I were such and such, I would come to him. Alas! there can nothing be imagined more absurd, or contrary even to sense and reason. If thou wert such and such, as thou fanciest a desire to be, thou wouldst not come to Christ; thou neededst him not. That which thou pretendest as a reason why thou shouldst not come, is the great reason pressed in the gospel why thou shouldst come. What madness is this? I am so unclean, I will not come to the fountain to wash;—wherefore was the fountain opened, but for sin and uncleanness? And the more uncleanness, the more need, and the more need the more reason to come. Necessity is a great errand, and our errand is a sufficient warrant. I am pursued by the law, I have condemnation within me, and nothing but condemnation. Well then, come to Christ Jesus, the city of refuge, where no condemnation is. Wherefore was this city appointed, but for this end? I beseech you every one who useth those debates, and taketh a kind of delight in them, know what they mean, how they wrong your own souls; how they dishonour Christ, and so God the Father; nay, how foolish and ridiculous they are,—that if it were not your perplexity indeed, they deserved no answer, but a rebuke or silence. I have seen people take delight in moving objections against the truth, yea, and study earnestly how to object against any answers given from the truth. Alas, thou meddlest to thine own hurt; thou art upon a way which shall never yield thee any comfort, but keep thy soul from establishment, as a wave tossed up and down! If ye believe not, but dispute, ye shall not be established.

But I would speak a word to those that have believed that have fled for refuge to Christ. Oh! it concerns you

most of all men to study to know this condemnation that ye are delivered from, that ye may be thankful, and may keep close within this city. I say, there is no man within the world should have more thoughts, more deep and earnest meditations on the curse and wrath of God, than those who are delivered from them through Christ; and my reason is, that ye may know how great a salvation ye have received, how great a condemnation ye have escaped, and may henceforth walk as those who are bought with a price. Your creation makes you not your own, but his, because he gave that being. But your redemption should make you twice more his, and not your own, because, when that being was worse than if it had not been at all, he made it over again. So ye are twice his: first, he made you with a word, but now he hath bought you with a price, and that a dear price,—his blood. Again, the keeping this curse always in your view and sight and application of it unto your sins, will make much employment for Christ. O how will ye often flee into that city! I think they are the greatest enemies of Jesus Christ, and his grace, who would have a believer have no more use of the law. I know not who can use the law if he do it not. I know not who can apply it unto Christ, the end of it, but he. Certainly he hath not only use of the commands as a rule of obedience, but the curse also, not to make him fear again unto bondage; no, no, but to make him see always the more necessity of Jesus Christ, that he may take up house in him, and dwell in him.

III.

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is difficult to determine which of these is the greatest privilege of a Christian,—that he is delivered from condemnation, or that he is made to walk according to the Spirit, and made a new creature; whether we owe more

to Christ for our justification, or sanctification: For he is made both to us: but it is more necessary to conjoin them together, than to compare them with each other. The one is not more necessary—to be delivered from wrath, than the other, to walk according to the Spirit. I think it were an argument of a soul escaped from condemnation, to have the great stream and current of its affections and endeavours towards sanctification, not that they may be accepted of God, but because they are accepted of God. It is not said, there is nothing condemnable in those that are in Christ, but there is no condemnation to them. There is indeed a body of death, and law of sin within them, a nature defiled with original pollution, and many streams flowing from it, which the sprinkling of the blood of Christ in justification, doth not take away. "If any man say there is no sin in him, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him." But here is the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ;—that removes the curse where the sin is,—that takes away the condemnation where all worthy of condemnation is And thus the soul's justification is parallel to Christ's condemnation. There was in him nothing condemnable, no sin, no guile in his mouth; yet there was condemnation to him, because he was in stead and place of sinners. "Our iniquities were laid on him," not in him; "he who knew no sin was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So then, the soul that fleeth into Jesus Christ's righteousness, though it have in it all that deserveth condemnation, yet there is no condemnation to it, because his righteousness is laid upon it, and Christ hath taken away the curse. The innocent Son of God was condemned, therefore are guilty sinners absolved. The curse was applied unto him who had no sin, but only was made sin, or sin laid on him, and therefore the sentence of absolution from the curse is applied unto them who have no righteousness, but are made the righteousness of God by free and gracious imputation. This I speak, because of many unsavoury and unsound expressions in this loose gen-

eration, that there is no sin in the justified, that justification removes it close, as if it had never been at all. I say, as the condemnation of Jesus Christ did not blot out his innocency and holiness within him, but only justice considered him in that account as a transgressor, who yet was the holy and spotless Lamb of God in himself, so likewise the justification of a sinner before God. doth not remove or blot out the very corruption and defilement of our natures, but only scrapes out our names out of the roll of his debtors, as having satisfied in our cautioner, and considers us as righteous on that account before God. And this likewise I speak for your use, that ye may loathe and abhor yourselves, as much in yourselves, who are made clean by the blood of Jesus Christ, as if ye were not washen. Nay, so much the more ye ought to remember your own sins, which he doth not remember as debt any more; and to be ashamed and confounded because they are pardoned. It is ordinary for souls to look on themselves with an eye of more complacency in themselves, when they apprehend that God looks favourably on them. I do not think that any soul can duly consider the gracious aspect of God in Jesus Christ to them, but they will the more loathe themselves. But I find it ordinary, that slight and inconsiderate thoughts of pardon beget jolly conceits in men's hearts of themselves. And this is even the sin of God's children; something is abated of our self-abhorring, when we have peace and favour spoken unto us. But I beseech all who believe there is no condemnation for them, to consider there are all things worthy of it in them, yea, nothing but what deserves it; and therefore let that aspect of God beget self-loathing and self-detestation in you. The more you apprehend he is pleased with you, be ye the more displeased with yourselves, because it is not yourselves he is pleased with, but his own well-beloved Son. The day of redemption is coming, when there shall be no condemnation, and nothing condemnable either. In heaven you shall be so, but while ye are here, this is the most important duty ye are called to,—to loathe yourselves, because of

all your abominations, and because he is pacified towards you, Ezek. xvi. at the close, and chap. xxxvi. 31; and xx. 43, 44. There is a new and strange mortification now pleaded for by many, whose highest advancement consisteth in not feeling, or knowing, or confessing sin, but in being dead to the sense and conviction of the same. Alas! whither are these reforming times gone? Is not this the spirit of Antichrist? I confess it is a mortification of godliness, a crucifying of repentance and holiness, a crucifying of the new man; but it is a quickening of the old man in the lusts thereof, a living to sin. This is a part of that new (but falsely so called) gospel that is preached by some; which, if an angel would bring from heaven, we ought not to believe it. "Other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid" already, upon which the prophets and apostles are builded,—even Christ Jesus. Lord, give the Spirit to understand these mysteries already revealed; but save us from these new discoveries and lights. That which we have received is able to make us perfect to salvation.

Every one pretends a claim and right to this privilege of Christians, to be pardoned and absolved from condemnation, who doth not put it out of question, though in the mean time "their iniquities testify against them;" and their transgressions say in the heart of a godly man, that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." Therefore the apostle describes the man that is in Jesus Christ, to be such an one, "that walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,"—not only to guard against the presumptuous fancy of those that live in their sins, that pretend to hope for heaven, but to stir up every justified soul to a new manner of conversation, since they are in Jesus Christ. We would speak a word of two things from this: First, That the Scripture gives marks and characters of justified and reconciled persons, that they may be known by, both to themselves and others. Next, That the Christian escaped condemnation, hath a new manner of walking, and is a new creature in Christ.

It might seem a strange thing, that this first were questioned in this generation, (if any the most clear and important truth could pass without scanning); the very tenor of the Scripture holds out so much of it. I wonder that any man that reads this chapter, or the epistles of James and John, should have any more doubt of it. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commands." Is not this a conclusion of our state and condition, from the conformity of our walking to the will of God? What divine truth can we be sure of, if this be uncertain? When the beloved disciple, who knew how to preach Christ, asserts it in express terms, 1 John v. 13, "These things I have written unto you that believe, that ye may know that you have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." This very thing was the great scope and purpose of that evangelic and divine epistle.

I find that Antinomians confound this question, that they may have the more advantage in their darkness. The question is not concerning the grounds of a man's believing in Christ, but concerning our assurance, or knowledge of our believing. There is a great mistake in Christians' practice, in confounding these two. It makes Christians very unreasonable in their doubtings and exercises; therefore let us have this before our eyes,—faith, in its first and pure acting, is rather an adherence and cleaving of a lost soul to Christ, than an evidence of its interest in him, or of his everlasting love. You know all, that it is one thing to know a thing, or love a thing, and another thing to reflect upon it, and know that I know and love it. John did write to believers, that they might know they did believe, and believe yet more. These things then, are both separable, and the one is posterior to the other,—"after ye believed ye were sealed." The persuasion of God's love and our interest in Christ, is the Spirit's seal set upon the soul. There is a mutual sealing here. The soul, by believing and trusting in Jesus Christ, "sets to its seal that God is true," as John speaks, John iii. 33.

When God speaks in his law, the soul receives that testimony of his justice and holiness, subscribes to the equity and righteousness of the sentence, by condemning itself. And when Christ speaks in the gospel, the soul seals that doctrine of free salvation, by approving and consenting with all its heart to the offer, subscribes to the way of salvation in Christ, and truth of his promises. And this is the truth of God and Christ sealed by the soul's believing. Then the Spirit of Jesus Christ afterward, when he pleaseth, irradiates and shines upon the soul, and discovers those things that are freely given, and witnesseth to the conscience of the believer, that he is a Son of God. Thus the Spirit seals the believer, and gives his testimony to his truth.

Now if we speak of the ground of the first, viz. of believing in Christ to salvation, I know none, but that which is common to sinners, and holden out in the gospel generally to all,—our sin and misery, and absolute necessity, and Christ's invitation of all to come, and receive his full and perfect salvation. I think a man should seek nothing in himself, whereupon to build his coming to Christ. Though it be true, no man can come to a Saviour, till he be convinced of sin and misery, yet no man should seek convictions as a warrant to come to Christ for salvation. He that is in earnest about this question, "how shall I be saved?"—I think he should not spend the time in reflecting on, and examination of himself, till he find something promising in himself; but from discovered sin and misery, pass straightway over to the grace and mercy of Christ, without any intervening search of something in himself to warrant him to come. There should be nothing before the eye of the soul but sin and misery and absolute necessity, compared with superabounding grace and righteousness in Christ; and thus it singly devolves itself over upon Christ, and receives him as offered freely, "without money and without price." I know it is not possible that a soul can receive Christ till there be some preparatory convincing work of the law, to discover sin and misery. But I

hold, that to look to any such preparation, and fetch an encouragement or motive therefrom, to believe in Christ, is really to give him a price for his free waters and wine; —it is to mix in together Christ and the law, in the point of our acceptation. And for souls to go about to seek preparations,—for a time resolving not at all to consider the promise of the gospel, till they have found them, and satisfaction in them, is nothing else "but to go about to establish their own righteousness, being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ." And therefore many do corrupt the simplicity of the gospel by rigid exactions of preparations, and measures of them, and by making them conditions or restrictions of gospel commands and promises: as in this, "Come ye that are wearied." And from thence they seem to exclude persons not so qualified, from having a warrant to believe. Alas! it is a great mistake of these and such words. Certainly these are not set down on purpose to exclude any who will come,—for, "whoever will, let them come and take freely;" but rather to encourage such wearied and broken souls as conceive themselves to be the only persons excluded, and to declare unto us in some measure, the nature of true faith, that a soul must be beaten out of itself, ere it can come to Christ. Therefore I conclude, that not only is it a ridiculous and foolish conceit of many Christians that use to object against believing,—if I were as such and such a person, if I did love God, if I had these fruits of the Spirit, if I walked according to the Spirit, then I might believe. Alas! how directly opposite is this to the terms of the gospel! I say, if thou placest satisfaction in these, and from that ground, comest to Jesus Christ, then thou dost not come really,—thou dost indeed establish thine own righteousness. Doth any saint, though ever so holy, consider himself under such notions of grace, when he comes to be justified? No indeed; but as an ungodly man rather, he must deny all that, though he had it. And besides, it is most unreasonable and incongruous, to seek the fruits before the tree be planted; and to refuse to plant the tree, till you can be-

hold the fruits of it. But also, it is contrary to the free and comfortable doctrine of the gospel, for a soul to seek the discovery of any thing in itself but sin, before it apply to Jesus Christ. I say, there must be some sense of sin, otherwise it hath not rightly discovered sin; but a soul should not be at the pains to discover that sense of sin, and find it out, so as to make it a motive of believing in Christ. He ought to go straight forward, and not return as he goes. He must indeed examine himself,—not to find himself a sensible humble sinner, that so he may have ground of believing; but that he may find himself a lost perishing sinner, void of all grace and goodness, that he may find the more necessity of Jesus Christ. And thus I think the many contentions about preparations, or conditions preparatory to believing, may be reconciled.

Now if the question be, as it is indeed, about the grounds of our assurance, and knowledge of our faith, certainly it is clear as the noon day, that as the good tree is known by the fruits thereof, and the fire by the heat thereof, so the indwelling of faith in the heart is known by its purifying of the heart and working by love. It makes a man a new creature, so that he and others may see the difference. Neither is this any derogation to the free grace of Christ, or any establishing of our own righteousness, except men be so afraid to establish their own righteousness, that they will have no holiness at all, but abandon it quite, for fear of trusting in it, which is a remedy worse than the disease, because I make it not a ground of my acceptation before God, but only a naked evidence of my believing in Christ, and being accepted of God. It being known that these have a necessary connection together in the Scriptures, and it being also known that the one is more obvious and easy to be discerned than the other. Sure I am, the Lamb's book of life is a great mystery, and unless this be granted, I see not but every man's regeneration and change shall be as dark and hidden, as the hidden and secret decrees of God's election; for the Spirit may immediately reveal both the one and the other. Is it any derogation to the grace of Christ,

to know what is freely given us? Doth it not rather commend his grace, when a soul looks upon itself, beautified with his comeliness, and adorned with his graces, and loathes itself in itself, and ascribes all the honour and praise to him? Is it not more injury to the fountain and fulness of grace in Christ, not to see the streams of it at all nor to consider them, than to behold the streams of grace that flow out of this fountain, as coming out of it? I think Christians may be ready to idolize their graces, and make them mediators, when they are known; but is this a good remedy of that evil, to abandon all sight and knowledge of the things freely given of God? Shall we not speak of the freeness of grace, because men's corruptions turn grace into carnal liberty, and wantonness? If these graces be in us, sure I am, it is no virtue to be ignorant of them, but rather a weakness and darkness. It must then be the light and grace of God to know them, and from thence to conclude that assurance of faith, which is not a forced, ungrounded persuasion, and strong fancy, without any discovered reason of it. Sure I am, the apostle's counsel is, to make our election sure, by making our calling sure. How shall any venture to look into those secrets of the Lamb's book of life, and read their name there? Undoubtedly they belong not to us,—they are a light inaccessible, that will confound and darken us more. Therefore, whoever would know their election, according to the Scriptures, must read the transcript and copy of the book of life, which is written in the hearts and souls of the elect. The thoughts of God are written in his works upon the spirits of men. His election hath a seal upon it,—"The Lord knoweth who are his; and who can break up this seal? Who hath understood the mind of the Lord?" None can, until the Lord write over his thoughts in some characters of his Spirit, and of the new creature, in some lineaments and draughts of his own image, that it may be known they are "the epistle of Christ, not written with ink and paper, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone but in fleshly tables of the heart," 2

Cor. iii. 3. Christ writes his everlasting thoughts of love, and good-will to us in this epistle; and that we may not think this doth extol the creature, and abase Christ, it is added, ver 5—"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." The seeing of grace in ourselves doth not prejudge the grace of God, unless we see it independent of the fountain, and behold not the true rise of it, that we may have no matter to glory of. It is not a safe way of beholding the sun, to look straight on it. It is too dazzling to our weak eyes,—you shall not well take it up so. But the best way is to look on it in water; then we shall more steadfastly behold it. God's everlasting love, and the redemption of Jesus Christ, is too glorious an object to behold with the eyes of flesh. Such objects certainly must astonish and strike the spirits of men with their transcendent brightness. Therefore we must look on the beams of this sun, as they are reflected in our hearts; and so behold the conformity of our souls, wrought by his Spirit, unto his will; and then we shall know the thoughts of his soul to us. If men shall at the first flight climb so high, as to be persuaded of God's eternal love, and Christ's purchase for them in particular, they can do no more, but scorch their wings, and melt the wax off them, till they fall down from that heaven of their ungrounded persuasion, into a pit of desperation. The Scripture way is to go downward once, that ye may go up. First go down in yourselves, and make your calling sure, and then you may rise up to God, and make your election sure. You must come by this circle; there is no passing by a direct line, and straight through, unless by the immediate revelation of the Spirit, which is not ordinary and constant, and so not to be pretended unto.

I confess, that sometimes the Spirit may intimate to the soul God's thoughts towards it, and its own state and condition, by an immediate overpowering testimony, that puts to silence all doubts and objections, that needs no other work or mark to evidence the sincerity and reality of it. That light of the Spirit shall be seen in its own

light, and needs not that any witness of it. The Spirit of God sometimes may speak to a soul,—"Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee." This may break into the soul as a beam darted from heaven, without reference to any work of the Spirit upon the heart, or word of Scripture, as a mids or mean to apply it. But this is more extraordinary. The ordinary testimony of the Spirit is certainly conjoined with the testimony of our own consciences, Rom. viii. 16,—"And our consciences bear witness of the work of the Spirit in us," which the Spirit discovers to be according to the word. The Spirit makes known to us things that are freely given; but, "by comparing things spiritual with spiritual," 1 Cor. ii. 10, 13. The fruit and special work of the Holy Ghost in us, is the *medium*, and the Spirit's light irradiates and shines upon it, and makes the heart to see them clearly. For, though we be the children of light, yet our light hath so much darkness, as there must be a supervenient and accessory light of the Spirit, to discover that light unto us. Now what is all this to us? I fear that there be many ungrounded persuasions among us,—that many build on a sandy foundation, even a strong opinion that it is well with them, without any examination of their souls and conversations according to the word; and this certainly, when the tempest blows, cannot stand. Some teach, that no man should question whether he believe or not, but presently believe. I think none can believe too suddenly; it is always in season, *nunquam sera est fides nec pœnitentia*,—it is never late in respect of the promise; and it is never too early in respect of a man's case. But I cannot think any man can believe, till the Spirit have convinced him of his unbelief; and therefore I would think the most part of men nearer faith in Jesus Christ, if they knew they wanted faith. Nay, it is a part of faith, and believing God in his word, and setting to our seal that God is true, for a man to take with his unbelief, and his natural inability, yea, averseness to it. I would think that those who could not believe in Christ,

because they sought honour one of another, and went about to kill him, they had done well to have taken with that challenge of Christ's; and if men ought to take with their sin, they ought to search and try their sin, that they may find it out, to take with it. I wonder, since Antinomians make unbelief the only sin in the world, that they cannot endure the discovery and confession of it. It seems they do not think it so heinous a sin. I confess, no man should of purpose abstain from believing in Christ, till he find out, whether he hath believed or not; but whatever hath been, he is bound presently to act faith in Jesus Christ; to flee unto him, as a lost sinner, to a saving Mediator. But that every man is bound to persuade himself at the first, that God hath loved him, and Christ redeemed him, is the hope of the hypocrite,—like a spider's web, which, when leaned to, shall not stand. That man's expectation shall perish; he hath kindled sparks of his own,—a wild-fire, and walketh not in the true light of the word, and so must lie down in sorrow. Many of you deceive yourselves, and none can persuade you that ye do deceive yourselves, such is the strength of that delusion and dream. It is the great part of the heart's deceitfulness, to flatter itself in its own eyes; to make a man conceive well of himself and his heart. I beseech you, do not venture your soul's salvation on such groundless opinions; never to question the matter, is to leave it always uncertain. If you would judge yourselves according to the Scriptures, many of you have the marks and characters of those who are kept without the city, and are to have their part in the lake of fire. Is there no condemnation for you, who have never condemned yourselves? Certainly the more you are averse to condemn yourselves, this sticks the closer to you. You are not all in Christ; "all are not Israel who are of Israel." Many (nay the most part) are but said [*i. e.* nominal] Christians; have no real union with Christ, or principle of life from him. The love you carry to yourselves, makes you easily believe well of yourselves; know,

that self-love can blind the eyes, and make you apprehend that God loves you also. Nay, every one readily fancies that to be, which he desires to be. I beseech you, consider if you have any ground for your hopes and confidences, but such as those that will not bear out always. It would be no advantage to you, to have your hope shaken, that instead of a vain presumption, you may have the anchor of hope, which shall be fixed within the vail. I think one thing keeps men far from the kingdom of God,—because they know not that they believe not in him. We had gained much ground on you by the word, if we could persuade you, that ye believe not, and have not believed from the womb. We might then say to you, as Christ to his disciples, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." Ye have given credit to God the judge and lawgiver, pronouncing a curse on you, and a sentence that ye have hearts desperately wicked,—now, believe also in me, the Redeemer. Ye have believed God in the law, in as far as ye have judged yourselves under sin and wrath; now, believe me in the gospel, that brings a ransom from wrath, and a remedy for sin. It is this very unbelief, that is the original of the world's perishing,—unbelief of the law. Ye do not consider ye are under the condemnation of it. Ye do not believe that ye have not yet fled to Jesus Christ to escape; and these two keep souls in a deep sleep, till judgment awake them.

But unto every one of you, I would give this direction: Let not examination of what you are, hinder you from that which is your chief duty, and his chief commandment,—to believe in him. I know many Christians are puzzled in the matter of their interest, and always wavering, because they are more taken up with that which is but a matter of comfort and joy, than that which is his greatest honour and glory. I say, to consider the precious promises; to believe the excellency and virtue of Jesus Christ, and love him in your souls, and delight in him, is the weightiest matter of the gospel. To go out of yourselves daily into his fulness, to endeavour new

discoveries of your own naughtiness, and his grace, this is the new and great commandment of the gospel. The obedience of it is the most essential part of a Christian walk. Now, again, to know that ye do believe, and to discern your interest in Christ, this is but a matter of comfort and of the second concernment. Therefore, I say, whenever ye cannot be clear in this, ye should be always exercised in the first. For it is that we are first called to; and if souls were more exercised that way, in the consideration and belief of the very general truths and promises of the gospel, I doubt not, but the light of these would clear up their particular interest in due time. "These things ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone." It is still safest to wave such a question of interest, when it is plunging, because it puts you off your special duty, and it is Satan's intent in it. It were better if ye do question, presently to believe and abide in him, till it were put out of question.

IV.

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Christ is made to us of God, both righteousness and sanctification; and therefore, those who are in Christ, do not only escape condemnation, but they walk according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh. These two are the sum of the gospel. There is not a greater argument to holy walking than this,—there is no condemnation for you, neither is there a greater evidence of a soul escaped condemnation, than walking according to the Spirit. We have spoken something in general of the evidence that may be had of a man's state, from his walking, and the Spirit's working in him; we would now speak of the conjunction of these two, and the influence that that privilege hath on this duty, and something of

the nature of this description, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

In the creation of man, man was composed of soul and body. There was a right order, and subordination of these, suitable to their nature. In his soul he reached angels above,—in his body he was like the beasts below; and this part, his flesh, was a servant to the soul, that was acted and affected according to the desires and motives of the soul. Now sin entering, as it hath defaced all the beauty of the creation, as it hath misplaced man, and driven him out from that due line of subordination to God his Maker, for he would have been equal to God, so it hath perverted this beautiful order in men, and turned it just contrary,—hath made "the servant to ride on horses, and the prince to walk on foot." This is the just punishment of our first sin. Adam's soul was placed by creation under the sole command of its Creator, above all the creatures, and his own senses; but in one sin, he proudly exalted himself above God, and lamentably subjected himself below his senses, by hearkening to their persuasion. He saw it was good, and tasted it, and it was sweet, and so he ate of it. What a strange way was this! To be like God, he made himself unlike himself, liker the miserable beasts. Now, I say, this is the deserved punishment of man. His soul, that was a free prince, is made a bond-slave to the lust of his flesh; flesh hath gotten the throne, and keeps it, and lords it over the whole man. Now therefore it is, that the whole man unregenerate, is called flesh, as if he had no immortal Spirit, John iii. 6, "that which is born of flesh, is flesh;" and this chap. ver. 8, here—a description of natural men, "they that are in the flesh;" because flesh is the predominant part that hath captivated a man's reason and will. Nay, not only the grosser corruptions in a man, that have their use and seat in his flesh and body, are under that name; —but take the whole nature of man, that which is most excellent in him, his soul and spirit, his light and understanding, the most refined principles of his conversation,

—all these are now but flesh. Nay, not only such natural gifts and illuminations, but even the light of the gospel, and law of God, that someway enters his soul, changeth the nature and name,—it is all but darkness and flesh in him, because the flesh hath a dominion over all that. The clouds and vapours that arise from the flesh, bemist and obscure all these; the corruptions of the soul are most strengthened in this sort, and most vented here. Sin is become connatural to the flesh, and so a man, by the flesh, is ensnared and subjected to sin. Christ comprehends all our prerogatives and endowments under this, John i. 13, "born not of flesh and blood;" and Matt. xvi. 17, "flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to thee." Even all the outwards of religion, and all the common privileges of Christians may be called so. What hath Abraham found according to the flesh? Rom. iv. 1. Phil. iii. 3;—which imports so much, that all those outward privileges, many illuminations, and reformations, may so far consist with the corruption of man's nature, may unite so with that, as to have one name with it. It is not all able to conquer our flesh, but our flesh rather subdues all that, and makes it serve itself, till a stronger than it come, even the Spirit, to subdue it, and cast it out of the house. Thus the image of God in man is defaced; nay, the very image and nature of man, as man, spoiled. The first creation,—sin hath marred and disordered it. Now, when this second creation, or regeneration comes, the creature is made new, and formed again by the powerful Spirit of Jesus Christ,—this change is made. Flesh is put out of the throne, as an usurper; the spirit and soul of a man is put in a throne above it, but is placed according to its due order, under a holy and spiritual law of God. And thus Jesus Christ is the repairer of the breaches, and restorer of the ancient paths and old wastes, to dwell in. Now, the soul hath a new rule established to act according to, and new principles to act from. He whose course of walking was after the corrupt dictates and commands of his fleshly affections, and was of no

higher strain, than his own sparks of nature, and acquired light would lead him to, now he hath a new rule established,—the Spirit speaking in the word to him, and pointing out the way to him. And there is a new principle, that Spirit leading him in all truth, and quickening him to walk in it. Now this is the soul's perfect liberty, to be from under the dominion of sin and lusts; and thus the Son makes free indeed by the free Spirit. The Son was made a servant, that we might be made free, "no more servants of sin in the lusts thereof:" and the Spirit of the Lord, where he comes, there is liberty; there the spirit and reasonable soul of a man is elevated into its first native dignity; there the base flesh is dethroned, and made to serve the spirit and soul in a man. Christ is indeed the greatest friend of men, as they are men. Sin made us beasts, Christ makes us men. Unbelievers are unreasonable men, αλογοι, brutish, yea, in a manner, beasts;—this is an ordinary compellation in Scripture. Faith makes a man reasonable,—it gives the saving and sanctified use of reason. It is a shame for any man to be a slave to his lusts and passions. It is the character of a beast upon him. He that is led by senses and affections, is degenerated from human nature; and yet such are all out of Christ. Sin reigns in them, and flesh reigns, and the principles of light and reason within are captivated, incarcerated within a corner of their minds. We see the generally received truths among men, that God is, that he is holy, and just, and good; that heaven and hell is. These are altogether ineffectual, and have no influence on men's conversations, no more than if they were not known, even because the truth is detained in unrighteousness. The corruptions of men's flesh are so rank, that they overgrow all this seed of truth, and choke it, as the thorns did the seed, Matt. xiii. 7. Now, for you, who are called of Jesus Christ, O know what ye are called unto! It is a liberty indeed, a privilege indeed. Ye are no more debtors to the flesh;—Christ hath loosed that obligation of servitude to it. O let it be a shame unto you, who

are Christians, to walk so any more, to be entangled any more in that yoke of bondage! "He that ruleth his spirit, is greater than the mighty, than he that taketh a city." Thus we are called to be more then conquerors. Others, when they conquer the world, are slaves to their own lusts; but let it be far from you to be so. Ye ought to conquer yourselves, which is more than to conquer the world. It is not only unbeseeming a Christian, to be led with passions and lusts, but it is below a man, if men were not now through sin below beasts. I beseech you, aspire unto, and hold fast the liberty Christ hath obtained for you. Be not fashioned any more according to former lusts. Know, ye are men,—that ye have reasonable and immortal spirits in you. Why will ye then walk as beasts? Understand, O brutish! and "ye fools, when will ye be wise?" But I say more, know, ye are Christians, and this is more than to be a man,—it is to be a divine man, one partaker of the divine nature, and who is to walk accordingly. Christians are called to a new manner of walking, and this walking is a fruit that comes out of the root of faith, whereby they are implanted in Christ. You see these agree well together, "those who are in Christ, walk not after the flesh," &c. Walking after the flesh, is the common walk of the world, who are without God and without Christ; but Christ gives no latitude to such a walk. This is a new nature to be in Christ, and therefore, it must have new operations,—to walk after the Spirit. While we look upon the conversations of the most part of men, they may be a commentary to expound this part of the words, what it is to walk after the flesh. "The works of the flesh," saith the apostle, Gal. v. 19, "are manifest;"—and indeed they are manifest, because written in great letters on the outside of many in the visible church, that who runs may read them. Do but read that catalogue in Paul, and then come and see them in congregations. It is not so doubtful and subtile a matter, to know that many are yet without the verge of Christ Jesus, without the city of refuge. You may see their

mark on their brow. Is not drunkenness, which is so frequent, a palpable evidence of this;—your envyings, revilings, wrath, strife, seditions, fornications, and such like? O do not deceive yourselves! There is no room in Jesus Christ for such impurities and impieties. There is no toleration of sin within this city and kingdom. Sinners are indeed pardoned, yea, received and accepted; drunkards, unclean persons, &c., are not excluded from entering here,—but they must renounce these lusts, if they would stay here. Christ will not keep both,—he must either cast out the sin, or the sinner with it, if he will not part with it. I beseech you, know what ye walk after; the flesh is your leader, and whither will it lead you?—O! 'tis sad to think on it,—to perdition; ver. 8, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." Ye think flesh your great friend, ye do all ye can to satisfy and please it; and, O how pleasant is the satisfaction of your flesh to you! Ye think it liberty to follow it, and count it bonds and cords to be restrained. But, oh! know and consider, that flesh will lead you by the kingdom; that guide of your way, to which ye committed yourself, will lead you by heaven, Gal. v. 21. It is a blind guide; corruption and humour, and will have no eyes; no discerning of that pit of eternal misery. They choose the way that is best pathed and trodden,—that is easiest, and most walk into; and this certainly will lead you straight into this pit of darkness. Be called off this way, from following your blind lusts, and rather suffer them to be crucified. Be avenged on them for your two eyes that they have put out, and their treacherous dealing to you, in leading you the high way to destruction. Come in to Jesus Christ, and ye shall get a new guide of the way,—"the Spirit that shall lead you in all truth," unto the blessed and eternal life. Christ is the way ye must walk in, and the life that we must go into at the end of our way, and the truth according to which we must walk. Now he hath given his Spirit, the Comforter, to be our leader in this way, according to this rule and pattern unto that life.

In a word, the Spirit shall lead you the straight way unto Christ. You shall begin in him, and end in him. He shall lead you from grace to glory. The Spirit that came down from heaven, shall lead you back to heaven. All your walk is within the compass of Christ,—out of him is no way to heaven.

But we must not take this so grossly, as if no other thing were a walking after the flesh, but the gross abominations amongst men, though even these will scrape a great number from being in Christ Jesus; but it must be further enlarged, to the motions and affections of the unrenewed spirit, and the common principles according to which men walk. And therefore the apostle, Col. iii. Gal. v., nameth many things among the works of the flesh, and members of the old man, which I doubt whether many will account so of;—some natural passions that we account nothing of, because common, as anger, wrath, covetousness. What man is there amongst us, in whom some of these mentioned stir not? Many of your hearts and eyes are given to covetousness; your souls bow downward as your bodies do, and many times before your bodies. Is not the heart of men upon this world, and cannot rise above to a treasure in heaven? And therefore your callings, otherwise lawful, and all your pains and endeavours in them, hath this seal of the flesh stamped on them, and pass no otherwise with God. We see how rank the corruptions of men are, anger domineering in them, and leading them often captive. And this is counted a light matter, but it is not so in Scripture. How often is it branded with folly by the wise man! And this folly is even the natural fleshly corruption that men are born with; and in how many doth it rise up to the elevation of malice and hatred of others? And then it carries the image of the devil, rather than of human infirmity. And if we suppose a man not much given to any of these, yet what a spirit of pride and self-love is in every man, even those that carry the lowest sail, and the meanest port among men,—those that are affable and courteous, and

those that seem most condescending to inferiors and equals. Yet, alas! this evil is more deeply engraven on the spirit. If a man could but watch over his heart, and observe all the secret reflections of it, all the comparisons it makes, all the desires of applause and favour among men, all the surmises and stirrings of spirit upon any affront, O how would they discover diabolic pride! This sin is the more natural and inbred, for that it is our mother-sin that brought us down from our excellency. This weed grows upon a glass window, and upon a dunghill. It lodges in palaces and cottages. Nay, it will spring and grow out of a pretended humility, and low carriage. In a word, the ambitious designs of men, the large appetite of earthly things, the over-weening conceit of ourselves, and love to ourselves, the stirring of our affections, without observing a rule upon unlawful objects, or in an unlawful manner, —all these are common to men, and men walk after them. Every man hath some predominant or idol, that takes him most up. Some are finer and subtiler than others, some their pleasures and gains without, others their own gifts and parts within; but both are alike odious before God, and both gross flesh and corruption before him.

There are two errors among men concerning this spiritual walking,—the one is the doctrine of some in these days, the other is the practical error of many of us. Many pretending to some near and high discoveries, as to Christ and the Spirit, have fallen upon the most refined and spiritualized flesh, instead of the Spirit indeed. They separate the Spirit from the Word, and reckon the word and law of God, which was a lamp to David's feet, among the fleshly rudiments of the world. But if they speak not "according to the law and testimony," saith Isaiah, "it is because there is no light in them." Thus their new light is but an old darkness, that could not endure even the darker light of the prophets. If they speak not according to the word, it is because there is no spirit in them. Is it not the Spirit the Comforter, which Christ promised to send to the apostles, and all that should believe in his

name through their word? For that Spirit was "a Spirit of truth, that should lead into all truth." And lest men should father their own fancies and imaginations on the Spirit of God, Christ adds, "he shall bring all things to your remembrance,"—those things that Christ hath spoken, and we have here written. The holy apostle to the Colossians, chap. iii. when he reproves the works of the flesh, and declares they had put them off, commends unto them, in opposition to these, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching one another in psalms and spiritual songs, with grace in your hearts to the Lord," ver. 16,—the Spirit here, not casting out the word, but bringing it in plentifully, and sweetly agreeing with it. The Spirit that Christ sent, did not put men above ordinances, but above corruptions, and the body of death in them. It is a poor and easy victory to subdue grace and ordinances,—every slave of the devil doth that. I fear, as men and angels fell from their own dignity, by aspiring higher, so those that will not be content with the estate of Christ and his apostles, but soar up in a higher strain of spirit, and trample on that ministration as fleshly and carnal,—I fear they fall from Jesus Christ, and come into greater condemnation. It is true indeed, 2 Cor. iii. 6, "the letter killeth," that is, the covenant of works preacheth now nothing but condemnation to men, but the Spirit of the gospel giveth life; nay, even the gospel separated from the Spirit of life in Jesus, is but a savour of death to souls. Shall we therefore separate the Spirit from the gospel and word, because the word alone cannot quicken us? David knew how to reconcile this,—"quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word," Psal. cxix. 25.—"Thy Spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness, and quicken me," Psal. cxliii. 10, 11. The word was his rule and the Spirit applied his soul to the rule. The word holds out the present pattern we should be conformed unto. Now if there be no more, a man may look all his days on it, and yet not be changed; but the Spirit within, transforms and changes a man's soul to more and more

conformity to that pattern, by beholding it. If a man shall shut his eyes on the pattern, he cannot know what he is, and ought to be. If he look only on the Spirit's work within, and make that his rule, he takes an imperfect rule, and an incomplete copy. And yet this is the highest attainment of these aspirers to new light. They have forsaken the word as their rule, and instead of it, have another law within them, as much as is already written on their hearts, which is in substance this, as they suppose,—I am bound to do no more than I have already power to do; I am not to endeavour more holiness than I have already. These men are indeed perfect here in their own apprehension, and do not know in part, and believe in part, and obey in part, because they are advanced the length of their own law and rule, their rule being of no perfection. Paul was not so, but forgetting what he had attained, he followed on to what was before him, and was still reaching forward. Let not us, my brethren, believe every spirit, and every doctrine that comes out under that name,—Christ hath forewarned us. Pray for more of that Spirit, which may quicken the word to us, and quicken us to obey the word. There must be a mutual enlivening. The word must be made the ministration of life, by the Spirit of Jesus, which can use it "as a sword, to divide the soul and spirit;" and we must be quickened to the obedience of the truth in the word. The word is the seed incorruptible; but it cannot beget us, or be a principle of new life within us, except a living spirit come along to our hearts. Know that the word is your pattern and rule; the Spirit your leader and helper, whose virtue and power must conform you to that rule, 1 Pet. i. 22. Peter joins these two,—the purification and cleansing of the soul, which Christ attributes to the word, "ye are clean through the word which I have spoken," John xv. 3. Peter attributes it to the Spirit working according to the pattern of truth. It is true, the Spirit of God needs no pattern to look to; nay, but we must have it, and eye it, else we know not the Spirit of truth from a lie and delusion. We

cannot try the spirits but by this rule; and it is by making us steadfastly look on this glorious pattern in the word, and the example of Christ Jesus' life, that we are conformed unto Christ, as by the Spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 13. Certainly that must be fleshly walking, which is rather conformed unto the imaginations of a man's own heart, than the blessed will of God revealed in his word. Can such walking please God, when a man will not so much as hearken to what is God's will and pleasure? As other heresies, so especially this, is a work of the flesh.

Now there is another principle amongst many of us. We account it spiritual walking, to be separated from the gross pollutions of the world, to have a carriage blameless before men. This is the notion that the multitude fancy of it. Be not deceived,—you may pass the censure of all men, and be unreprovable among them, and yet be but walkers after the flesh. It is not what you are before the world can prove you spiritual men, though it may prove many of you carnal. Your outside may demonstrate of many of you, that ye walk after the flesh; and if ye will not believe it, I ask you if ye think drunkenness a walking in the Spirit? Do ye think ye are following the Spirit of God, in uncleanness? Is it not that Holy Spirit that purgeth from all filthiness? Look but what your walk is, ye that are not so much as conformed to the letter of the word in any thing; who care not to read the Scriptures, and meditate on them. Is this walking after the Spirit of truth? If drunkenness, railing, contention, wrath, envy, covetousness, and such like, be the Spirit's way, then I confess, many of you walk after the Spirit; but if these be the manifest works of the flesh, and manifestly your way and work, then why dream ye that ye are Christians?

But I suppose, that ye could be charged with none of these outward things; that you had a form of religion and godliness, yet I say, all that is visible before men, cannot prove you to be spiritual walkers. Remember it is a Spirit ye must walk after; now, what shall be the

chief agent here? Sure, not the body,—what fellowship can your body have with him that is a Spirit? The body indeed may worship that eternal Spirit, being acted by the Spirit, but I say, that alone can never prove you to be Christians. We must then lay aside a number of professors, who have no other ground of confidence but such things as may be seen of men; and if they would enter their hearts, how many vain thoughts lodge there! How little of God is there! God is not almost in all our thoughts; we give a morning and evening salutation, but there is no more of God all the day throughout. And is this walking after the Spirit, which imports a constancy? And what part can be spared most, but the spirit of a man? The body is distracted with other necessary things, but we might always spare our souls to God. Now, thus should a man obey that command,—"pray always." It is impossible that he should do nothing else but pray in an express formal way; but the soul's walking with God, between times of prayer, should compensate that. And thus prayer is continued, though not in itself, yet in meditation on God, which hath in it the seed of all worship, and is virtually prayer and thanksgiving, and all duties.

Let us then consider. If our bodies be not more exercised in religion than our souls, yea, if they be not the chief agents, how many impertinencies, and roveries, and wanderings, are throughout the day? The most part of our conversation, if it be not profane, yet it is vain, that is, unprofitable in the world. It neither advantageth us spiritually, nor glorifies God. It is almost to no purpose; and this is enough to make it all flesh. And for our thoughts, how do they go unlimited and unrestrained?—like a wild ass, traversing her ways, and gadding about, fixed on nothing,—at least not on God; nay, fixed on any thing but God. If it be spiritual service, should it not carry the seal of our spirit and affection on it? We are as so many shadows walking, as pictures and statues of Christians, without the soul and life, which consists in

the temper and disposition of the spirit and soul towards God.

V.

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is no wonder that we cannot speak any thing to purpose of this subject, and that you do not hear with fruit, because it is indeed a mystery to our judgments, and a great stranger to our practice. There is so little of the Spirit, both in teachers and those that come to be taught, that we can but speak of it as an unknown thing, and cannot make you to conceive it, in the living notion of it as it is. Only we may say in general,—it is certainly a divine thing, and another thing than our common or religious walk is. It is little experience, so we can know the less of it; but this much we should know,—it is another thing than we have attained. It is above us, and yet such a thing as we are called to aspire unto. How should it stir up in our spirits a holy fire of ambition to be at such a thing, when we hear it is a thing attainable; nay, when Christ calls us unto himself, that we may thus walk with him! I would have Christians men of great and big projects and resolutions; of high and unlimited desires, not satisfied with their attainments, but still aspiring unto more of God, more conformity to his will, more walking after the Spirit, more separation from the course of the world. And this is indeed to be of a divine Spirit. The divine nature is here, as it were, in a state of violence, out of its own element. Now, it is known by this, if it be still moving upwards, taking no rest in this place, and these measures and degrees, but upon a continual motion towards the proper centre of it,—God, his holiness, and Spirit.

We desire to speak a word of these three. First, The nature of the spiritual walking. Next, Its connection and union with that blessed state of non-condemnation.

And then of the order of this, how it flows from a man's being implanted in Christ Jesus ;—which three are considerable in the words.

This spiritual walking is according to a spiritual rule, from spiritual principles, for spiritual ends. These three being established aright, the walk is even the motion of a Christian within the compass of these. It is according to the word, as the holy rule; it is from the faith and love of Jesus Christ, as the predominant principles. Nay, from the Spirit of Jesus, living in the heart by faith, and dwelling in it by love, as the first wheel of this motion, the *primum mobile.* And as it begins in the spirit, so it ends there, in the glory of Jesus Christ, and our heavenly Father. Consider this then,—it is not a lawless walking and irregular walk, it is according to the rule, and the rule is perfect, and it is a motion to perfection, not a rest in what is now attained to. The course of this world is the way and rule of the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. There is a spirit indeed that works in them, and a rule it works by. The spirit is that evil spirit, contrary to the Holy Spirit of God; and you may know what spirit it is that works, by the way it leads men unto—a broad way, pathed and trodden in by many travellers. It is the king's high street, the common way that most part walk into, according as their neighbours do, as the most do. But that king is the prince of this world, Satan, who blinds the eyes of many, that they may not see that pit of misery before them, which their way leads them to. A Christian must have a kind of singularity, not in opinion, but in practice rather, to be more holy, and walk more abstracted from the dregs of the world's pollution. This were a divine singularity. Indeed men may suspect themselves, that separate from the godly in opinion. They have reason to be more jealous of themselves, when they offend against the generation of the just. But if this were the intention and design of men, to be very unlike the multitude of men, nay, to be very unlike the multitude of professors, in the affection and practice

of holiness, humility, and spiritual walking, I think this were an allowed way, though a singular way. Men may aspire to as great a difference as may be, from the conversations and practice of others, if there be a tending to more conformity to the word, the rule of all practice. "The law is spiritual and holy," saith Paul, "but I am carnal." This, therefore, were spiritual walking,—to set that excellent spiritual rule before our eyes, that we who are carnal, may be transformed and changed into more likeness to that holy and spiritual law. If a man had not an imperfect rule of his own fancy and imagination before his eyes, he could not be satisfied with his attainments, but, with Paul, would forget them,—in a manner, not know them, but reach forward still to what is before. Because so much length would be before us, as would swallow up all our progress,—this would keep the motion on foot and make it constant. A man should never say, "Master, let us make tabernacles, it is good to be here." No, indeed, the dwelling-place and resting would be seen to be above. As long as a man had so much of his journey to accomplish, he would not sit down in his advancement; he would not compare with others, and exalt himself above others. Why? Because there is still a far greater distance between him and his rule, than between the slowest walker and him. This made Paul more sensible of a body of death, Rom. vii. than readily lower Christians are. Reflections on our attainments and comparisons with others, which are so often the work of our spirit, are a retrograde motion; it makes no way, but spends the time,—is a returning as we go; whereas we ought to go straight forward. I beseech you, Christians, consider what you are doing, if you would prove yourselves so indeed. I know not how you can evidence it better, than by honouring and esteeming his word and commandments,—exceeding large and precious; no end of their perfection. The word is much undervalued in the opinions of many, but it is as little cared for in the practice of most. There is certainly little of God there,

where this is not magnified and honoured. There must be darkness in that way, where this candle, which was a lamp to David's feet, shines not. Some promise to us liberty, but they themselves are the servants of corruption; it is no liberty to be above all law and rule. It was innocent Adam's liberty to be conformed to a holy and just command; nay, this was his beauty. The Spirit indeed gives liberty where he is, but this liberty is from our sins and corruptions, not to them. It looses the chains of a man's own corrupt lusts off him, to walk at freedom in the way of his commandments. The Spirit enlargeth the prisoner's heart, and then he runs, but not at random, but "the way of his commands," Psalm cxix. 32. It was our bondage to be as wild asses, traversing our ways,—to be gadding abroad, to change our way. Now, here is the Spirit's liberty to bring us into the way, and that way is one. Let us then learn this one principle,—the word must be the rule of your walking, both common and religious. Alas! it is not spiritual walking, to confine religion to some solemn duties. Remember, it is a walk, a continued thing, without interruption; therefore your whole conversation ought to be as so many steps progressive to heaven. Your motion should not be to begin only when you come to pray, or read, or hear, as many men do. They are in a quite different way and element when they step out of their civil callings into religious ordinances. But Christians, your motion should be continued in your eating and drinking, and sleeping, and acting in your callings, that when you come to pray or read, you may be but stepping forward in the way, out of one darker, obscurer path, into a more beaten way. Remember, this word can make us perfect to salvation. It is a principle in the hearts of folks, which is vented now by many, that the word doth not reach their particular carriages and conversations in civil matters. These are apprehended to be without the sphere and compass of the word; while it is commonly cast up to ministers—meddle with the word and spiritual things, and not with our matters. Truly I think, if we separate these from the word, we

may quickly separate all religion from such actions; and if such actings and businesses be without the court of the word, they are also without the court of conscience; conscience, religion, and the word being commensurable. Therefore I beseech every one of you, take the word for the ruling of your callings and conversations among men. Extend it to all your actions, that in all these you may act as Christians as well as men. It is certainly the licentiousness of the spirits of men, that cannot endure the application of the word unto their particular actions and conversations.

Now this spiritual walk proceeds from spiritual principles. It is certain, the Spirit of Jesus Christ is he "in whom we live, and move, and have our being" spiritually. Without him we can do nothing. And therefore Christians ought to walk with such a subordination to, and dependence on him, as if they were mere instruments, and patients under his hand. Though I think, in regard of endeavoured activity, they should bestir themselves, and give all diligence, as if they acted independently of the Spirit; yet in regard of denial of himself, and dependence on the Spirit, each one ought to act as if he did not act at all, but the Spirit only acted in him. This is the divinity of Paul,—"I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but grace in me. I live, yet not I, but Christ in me." O how difficult a thing is it to reconcile these two in the practice of Christians, which yet cannot really be, except they be together! It is certainly one of the great mysteries of Christianity, to draw our strength and activity from another, to look upon ourselves and our actings, as they can do nothing,—as empty vines; and that notwithstanding of all infused and acquired principles. Whatever we ought to do in judging and discerning of our condition, yet sure I am, Christians, in the exercise and practice of godliness, should look upon themselves void of any principle in themselves either to do or think. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves. The proficient and growing Christian should look no more on his own inclinations and habits, than if he had

none. He should consider himself an ungodly man, that no fruit can grow upon, one that cannot pray, as he is in himself. But, alas! we come to duties in the confidence of qualifications for duties, act more confidently in them because accustomed to them, and so make grace and religion a kind of art and discipline, that use and experience make expert unto. Learn now this one thing, which would be instead of many rules and doctrines to us,—to shut out of your eyes the consideration of what you are by gifts, or grace, or experience. Do not consider that, but rather fix your eyes on the grace of Jesus Christ, and upon the power and virtue of the Holy Spirit, which is given by promise; that when the way is all the easiest to you, both by delight and custom, yet you may find it to your natural principles as insuperable as at the beginning; and may still cry "Draw me, and I will run after thee; lead me, and I will walk with thee." Do not measure the call into duties, by the strength thou findest in thyself, but look unto him who strengtheneth us with all might. Now, the Spirit worketh in us by subordinate spiritual principles, as believing in Christ, and loving of him, as our Lord and Saviour; and these two acts drive on a soul sweetly in the way of obedience. Fear, where not mixed in its actings with faith and love, is a spirit of bondage; but the Christian ought to walk according to the spirit of adoption, which cries, "Abba, Father." Yet how many Christians are rather in a servile and slavish manner driven on by terrors and chastisements to their duty, than by love! There is a piece of liberty in Christian walking, when there is not a restraint upon the spirit, by this slavish fear. This, I say, is not beseeming those that are in Christ Jesus. You ought to have the Spirit of your Father for your leader and guide. O how sweet, and how certain and necessary also, would this walking be! The love of Christ would be an inward principle of motion, and would make our spiritual actings as easy and pleasant as natural motions are. Fear is but a violent principle, that is like the impulse of a stone thrown up-

ward; as long as that external impression remains, it moves, but still slower and slower, and at length evanisheth. But if you believed in him, and your hearts were engaged to love him, O how would it be a pleasant and native thing to walk in his way, as a stone goeth downward! Consider your principles, that act you to matters and duties of religion. Many men there be, in whom there appears no difference of their work to beholders; but O how wide a difference doth God discern in them! Engines and artifice may make dead and lifeless things move and walk as orderly as things that have life. But the principle of this motion makes a huge difference;—the one is moved from without, the other from itself. The most part of us act as irrational and brute beasts in religion; nay, we walk as inanimate and senseless creatures. It is some one or other consideration without us moves us,—custom, censure, education, and such like. Ah! these are the principles of our religion. How many would have no religion, no form of it, if they were not among such company! And therefore we see many change it according to companies, as the fish doth its skin, according to the colour of that which is nearest it. How many would do many things they dare not for punishment and censure, and for that same dare not leave other things undone! In a word, the most part of us are such as would walk in no path of godliness, if it were not the custom of the time and fear of men that constrained us. But, my brethren, let it not be so among you, you who are in Jesus Christ. Let this be predominant in your hearts to constrain you not to live to yourselves, but unto God, even this,—that you believe Christ hath died for sinners, that they might live from sin. And from this let your hearts be inflamed with his love, that it may carry you on in a sweet and blessed necessity to walk in all well-pleasing. Let the consideration of his love lay on a constraint, but a constraint of willingness, to live to him who hath thus loved you. But as the principle is spiritual, so must the end be; and I think these two complete the mystery of the

practice of Christianity,—to act from another principle unto another end; even as these two make up the mystery of iniquity in our hearts,—to act for ourselves unto ourselves. Every man naturally makes a god of himself, is his own Alpha and Omega, the beginning of his actions, and the end of them, which is proper to God. As the fall hath cut off the subordination of the soul to God in its actions, that it cannot now derive all from that blessed Fountain of all-being and well-being, so is this channel of reference of all our actions to God stopped, that they do not tend unto him, as they are not derived from him; and thus they return from a man's self again. There is one point of self, and making it our aim and design, which possibly many do not take heed unto. It is ordinary for us to act and walk in Christian duties, for our salvation,—for obtaining of life eternal, as our chief and only end, which is but an inferior end; because we ought not to walk mainly for life, but to life. We should not walk after the command only for heaven, but in the way of it unto heaven. Our spiritual walking can never purchase us a right unto the least of his mercies. When we have done all, this should be our soul's language,—We are unprofitable servants, our righteousness extends not to thee. What gain is it to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Yet for the most part, we make our walking as a hire for the reward. The covenant of works,—doing for life, is some way naturally imprinted in our hearts, and we cannot do, but we would live in doing; we cannot walk unto all well-pleasing, but we would also walk unto pacifying of God. Self-righteousness is men's great idol, which, when all other baser and grosser idols are down, they do all seek to establish. But, Christians, observe this evil in yourselves, and suffer this mystery of godliness to be wrought in you,—the abasing of yourselves, the denial of yourselves. I would have you, in respect of diligence and earnestness, doing, walking, and running, as if ye were to be saved by it only. But again, you must deny all that, and no more consider it, or lean upon it, than if ye ought to do

nothing, or did nothing. But your ends should be more divine and high, as your nature is,—to glorify God in your mortal bodies, since ye are his, and bought with a price. O how ought ye not to be your own! The great purpose of your obedience should be, a declaration of your sense of his love, and of your obligation to him. Ye ought to walk in his way, because ye are escaped condemnation, and saved by him, and not that ye may be saved only. It is the glory of our heavenly Father, and the honour of the Redeemer, for Christians to walk, even as he walked, and follow his footsteps. It commends the grace of Jesus Christ exceedingly. Therefore this cannot but be the choice and delight of a believing soul,—to walk unto all well-pleasing, to have the glory of him as their great design to aim at; who for our salvation laid aside his glory, and embraced shame and reproach. We use to walk in obedience to God, that we may pacify God for our disobedience. But let a Christian abhor such a thought. Christ's blood must pacify, but the walking of his child pleaseth him in his well-beloved Son. When he is once pacified for sin, when he once accepts your persons, your performances are his delight. Now this should be the great scope of a soul, that all its powers should be fixed on,—to please him, and live to him.

Now these three being established, we must conceive that the chief agent and party in this walking must be spiritual; therefore men's bodies are not capable of this walk after the Spirit principally. Outward ordinances are but the shell wherein the kernel must be inclosed. All our walking that is visible to men, is but like a painted or engraven image and statue, that hath no breath or life in it, unless the Spirit actuate and quicken the same. I say not only the Spirit of God, but the spirit and soul in man; for the Spirit's immediate and divine operations are upon such a suitable subject as the immortal soul. Verily, there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding. We must not abolish the outward form, because it hath some divinity in it, even the

stamp of God's authority; and therefore, those who are swelled above ordinances, I fear they be monstrous Christians. A man is composed of a spirit and a body, acted and quickened by that spirit. Without either of these, he is not a complete man. So I say, he is not a Christian, that doth not worship God in the spirit and in truth both; and it is not religion that excludes either the inward soul-communion with God, or the outward ordinance and appointment of God. But, alas! this may be our complaint,—we come and worship God, and draw nigh with our bodies, but our hearts are far removed. Here is the death of many's worship,—the soul is separated from the body of it. These are but pictures and images of Christians. We have mouths and faces of saints; but O how little of divine affection or of soul-desires, breathes in us! We are deniers of the power of godliness, by resting in a form, and this is the great sin of this generation. The essentials, the vital spirits of Christianity are exhausted, and some dry bones, like an anatomy of a Christian, remain behind. I beseech you, gather your spirits to this spiritual walking: They only can follow the Spirit. Your bodies are earthly and lumpish, and the way is all upward to the holy hill. Look inwardly and measure yourselves so. Outward appearance is no just measure. Retire within your souls, and engage them in this exercise, and enter them to this motion, and your spirits will sweetly and surely act your bodies and externals, in all matters of godliness.

VI.

Verse 1.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is one of the greatest mysteries in a Christian's practice, to join these two together, which the gospel hath conjoined,—justification and sanctification, and to place them in their due order. There is much miscarrying in both these, if they are either separated or misplaced. But the truth

is, they cannot really be, except they be jointly. Yet, often it falls out, that in men's apprehensions and endeavours, they are disjoined. This, then, were the argument of a living, and believing Christian,—to join the study of holiness, with the exercise of faith in Christ, for remission of sin and righteousness; and not only to join it, but also to derive it from that principle. There is both an union between these and an order established in Scripture. The most part of those that profess the gospel are of two sorts; they do either divide holiness from imputed righteousness, or Christ's righteousness from holiness. I do not say, that any man truly seeks to be covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and to have his sins freely pardoned, but he will also study to walk before God in all well pleasing. But the truth is, many do pretend and profess to seek salvation and forgiveness in Christ's blood, and have the mercy of God, and merits of Christ always in their mouth, who yet declare by their conversation, that they do not so much as desire or propose to seek after holiness. I do not speak of those who are Antinomians in profession, but of a great multitude in the visible church, who are really more Antinomians, to wit, in practice, than most part of professed Antinomians. You hear all of free grace, and free redemption in Jesus Christ, of tender and enduring mercies in God, and this you take for the whole gospel; and presently, upon the notion of mercy and grace, you conclude unto yourselves, not only immunity and freedom from all the threatenings of the word, and from hell, but likewise ye proclaim secretly in your own hearts, a liberty to sin so much the more securely. The door of mercy cast open in the gospel, and the free access to Christ manifested therein, through the corruption that is within us, proves the very occasion of many's giving indulgence to their lusts—of delaying reformation, and turning to God. You all profess, that you seek to be justified and saved by Jesus Christ; yea, you persuade yourselves to be escaped condemnation by Christ. Now then, conjoin that profession and persuasion with your walk, and O how contrary

you may find them to one another! Your faith is vain, "for ye are yet in your sins," Tit. ii. 11, 12. The grace of God appearing to some men effectually, teacheth them "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly," &c. But if we may conjecture your teaching by your walking, it seems the notion of grace and the gospel that is formed in your minds, hath taught you another doctrine,—to avow ungodliness and follow worldly lusts. Is there so much as a shadow of this spiritual walking in many? I confess, it is natural for every man to seek his own righteousness, and it is the arm of God that must bow men to submit to Christ's imputed righteousness. Yet, the most part of men seem to be so far from seeking any righteousness, that they are rather seeking the fulfilling of their own carnal lusts, working wickedness with greediness, not caring how little they have to put confidence into. And yet, certain it is, that how much soever a man attains to of a form of religion or civil honesty, he is ready to put his trust in it, and to lean the weight of his soul upon it. But seeing this is natural to you all, to seek heaven by doing and working, I wonder that ye do no more. How do you satisfy your consciences in the expectation of heaven, who take so little pains in religion, and are so loose and profane in your conversation? I wonder, seeing ye have it naturally engraven in your hearts to establish your own righteousness, that ye labour not to have more of it to fill your eye withal.

But again, on the other hand, there are some men, who have a form of religion, and labour to be of a blameless conversation among men, that possibly persuade themselves they are seeking holiness, and walking spiritually. But, alas! you may find it but a painted and seeming religion, that is an abomination in the sight of God; because it is to them, all the ground of their acceptation before God. If ever this question was moved in some of you, "What shall I do to be saved?" you have condescended on such a walk, such a profession for the answer of it. It is natural to all, even those who have least ap-

pearance of godliness, to seek heaven by doing God's will. Those that have no more to speak of than their baptism, or receiving the Lord's Supper, or attending well the solemn assemblies, will ground their hope of salvation on these things. How much more, will the civil and honest men, commonly so called, who pray and read, and profess godliness,—how much more, I say, will they establish that which they attain to, as the ground of their confidence before God! Now, this is a general, unknown ill that destroys the world, and yet few are convinced of it, how hard it is to be driven out of ourselves, and to seek life in another. O know, that it is in a manner the crucifying of a man's self, thus to deny himself,—to have a sort of righteousness, and not to trust in it. Who is he that cannot endure to look upon himself for moral vileness? Alas, men flatter themselves in their own eyes, and look with a more favourable eye on their own actions, than they ought. Who is he that abhors himself even for abominable works? But who shall be found to abhor himself for his most religious and best actions? Who casts these out of his sight as unclean and menstruous things? Therefore, I say, though thy righteousness were equal to, or exceeded any Pharisee's righteousness, thou canst not enter into heaven. The poor publican, that was a vile and profane sinner, yet had a righteousness exceeding the Pharisee's. Though he had none of his own, yet he had a righteousness without blemish, of Christ's purchasing, having by faith fled to the mercy of God, in and through a Mediator. It is not more doing, more praying, more exact walking, that can make you more righteous in God's account, in order to absolution from law-condemnation, than the profanest and most wretched sinner. But the baser and viler thou be in thine own eyes, the more thou hide thy best doings from thine eyes, and look on thy uncleanness, and betakest thyself to Christ, his unspotted and perfect righteousness, the more honourable and precious thou art in his eyes. Therefore, God is said to dwell in the heart of the humble and contrite one, not for the

worth of his humility and repentance; no, no, but for the pleasure he hath in the Well-beloved's righteousness. That is the beautiful garment, only in the eye of a humbled soul, that seeth nothing in itself desirable.

Therefore, I wish that this conjunction which is made in the gospel, were also engraven in your hearts, and on your practices, that is, that you would "seek after holiness, without which no man shall see God." Seek to perfect it in the fear of God, but not as though ye were to be thereby justified. Seek it with that diligence and earnest study, as if ye were to be saved by it, and yet seek it, so as to be denied to your diligence, or as if ye sought it not at all. How sweet a conjunction were this in the Christian's practice, to walk and run so after the prize, as if his walking did obtain it, and yet to look upon his walking, as if it were not at all. Your diligence and seriousness in godliness should be upon the growing hand, as if doing did save you; yet you ought to deny all that, and look to the righteousness of another, as if nothing were done at all by you. How doth Paul, Phil. iii. 8, unite these in his practice, "I count all loss and dung to be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness," and yet I press forward, and follow after perfection, as having attained nothing yet. One of these two is the original of many stumblings and wanderings in our Christian way. Either there is not a necessity and constraint laid upon the souls of many to walk in all well-pleasing, and to "perfect holiness in the fear of God,"—we look on it as a thing indifferent, that is to be determined according to the measure of our receivings from God, or we look on it as a thing not urging all, but belonging to ministers, or more eminent professors; and hence there ariseth much carnal liberty, in walking without the line of Christian liberty, because there is an indifference in the spirit that gives that latitude in walking; or else there is not that following of holiness in such a way, as can consist with the establishing of Christ's righteousness,—no denial of ourselves in our actions. We act as if we were sufficient

of ourselves, and walk as if we were thereby justified, and commend ourselves to God in our own consciences, whenever we can have the testimony of our consciences for well-doing. And by this means the Lord is provoked. Because we do not honour the Son, the Father counts himself despised, and the Spirit is grieved and tempted to depart, and leave us to our own imaginations, till our idol which we established fall down, and our understanding return to us.

As it would be of great moment to the peace of Christians, and increase of holiness, to have that union of justification and sanctification stamped on their hearts, so especially to have the due and evangelic method and order of these impressed on their consciences, would conduce exceedingly, both to their quickening and comforting. As there is nothing, that either so deadens or darkens, and saddens the spirits of the godly, as darkness in this particular, the ignorance and mistake of the method and order of that well-ordered covenant must certainly be very prejudicial to the life and consolation tendered by the gospel. This spiritual walking flows from the believer's state of non-condemnation in Christ. He is once in Jesus Christ, and then he walks after the Spirit of Christ. You may make engines to cause a dead statue walk, but it cannot walk of itself till it have a principle of life in it. Walking is one of the operations of life, that flows from some inward principle, and so this spiritual walk and motion of a Christian in his course, is the proper operation of the new nature that he is a partaker of in Christ Jesus. As, then, you know it is impossible that there can be true and unfeigned walking, where there is no life, no principle within, to put the creature to motion, though a man may by art and some external impulse so act a piece of timber or stone, as it may resemble to you a walking like to living creatures, so it is not possible that any of the sons of Adam, who are by nature dead in sins, can walk spiritually, before they be united to Jesus Christ, by believing in him for righteousness and salvation. There

may be such a walking of carnal unregenerate men, as may deceive all the senses and judgments of beholders. Men may be acted from base external principles in matters of religion, so that a beholder shall perceive no difference between them and others in whom Christ lives and walks; but before God it is nothing else but an artificial walk, a painted and dead business, because "the Spirit that raised up Christ," is not stirring in them. They are not living members of that head that quickens all, have not been driven out of their own righteousness to Christ,—the city of refuge. Their principles are no higher than walking to obtain salvation, and acceptation of God in a legal way, walking to pacify him, walking to please men and their own consciences, walking for gain or credit, or advantage in the way, walking according to custom or education in the way. These are not living principles. But when once a soul hath embraced Christ Jesus within it, he becomes in a manner a soul to actuate and quicken that soul. He animates it, and moves it in God's ways, according to the covenant of grace,—"I will put my Spirit in you, and cause you walk in my ways." There is first quickening, and then walking; "You who were dead in sins, hath he quickened together with Christ," Eph. ii. 1, 5; and then it follows in due order,—"I will cause you to walk in my ways," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Christ comes into the heart to dwell, and then he walks in it; 2 Cor. vi. 16. And what is that,—Christ to walk in believers? It is nothing else, but Christ by his Spirit making them to walk in his way. There is so little in us to principle a spiritual action, even when renewed and quickened, that we should look on ourselves not so much as workers with him, but as being acted by him. We should look on soul and body as pieces of organized clay that cannot move, but as they are moved by him as the soul and life of them; so that, according to the Scripture dialect, a Christian is nothing else, but Christ living and walking in such a person. This is it which Christ, when he is to go out of the world, instructs his disciples into, John xv. 1.

"He is the vine, and we the branches." The branch must first be united to the tree, and implanted into the tree, ere it bring forth fruit. Without the tree it withers. So must a soul be first ingraft in Jesus Christ, implanted in him by faith in his death and sufferings, before it can grow up into "the similitude of his resurrection, or walk in newness of life," as Paul speaks, Rom. vi. 4, 5. "Without me ye can do nothing." Ye must first be one with him, by believing in him, and receiving him as a complete Saviour, and then the sap and virtue of the tree flows into the dead branch, and it shoots forth, and blossoms and bears.

Now, if this doctrine of Christ and his apostles were duly pondered and believed, O what a change would it make on the lives and spirits of Christians! Since this is the order established in the gospel, and an order suitable both to his grace and our necessity, (as all that is in it speaketh forth an excellent contriver)—when we go about to establish our souls in another method, how is it possible that we should not weary and vex our souls in vain? How can we choose but torment ourselves and intricate ourselves still more? Our method and way is just contrary. We perplex our souls how to find the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, how to walk after the Spirit, without first closing entirely with Christ himself. We trouble ourselves to find the operations of a spiritual life, before we lay hold on Christ, who is the life of our souls. It is made an argument by many, to keep them from believing in Christ, because they do not find that spiritual life stirring in them. How cross is this to the declared mind of Christ in the gospel! It cannot choose but both darken the spirit more, and dry up the influences of the Spirit of God, because it keeps thee from the fountain of all consolation. You may disquiet your souls by this means, but you shall never make advantage this way. Without him "ye can do nothing:" and yet ye will not come to him, because ye have done nothing. It is strange how little reason is in it, if your eyes were opened. You refuse or delay to abide in the vine till you bring forth fruit, and fruit ye cannot bring forth till you

be in the vine. You would walk, and you will not have the life from which you must walk Paul lived indeed, but what a life! "The life that I live is by the faith of the Son of God." Faith in Christ transported him out of himself to Christ, or received Christ into the soul, and Christ in the soul was the life of his soul, Gal. ii. 20. Your walking is as if a dead man would essay to go. "Will one expect figs of thorns, or grapes of thistles?" I beseech you, know what wrong ye do to yourselves, and to Christ. Ye wrong yourselves, because ye stand in the way of your own mercy, ye stand aback from your life, —him that is "the way, the truth, and the life." You would walk in the way, but no man can walk in this way, but by this way. Christ must quicken you to walk in himself. Ye must get life in him, and not bring it. You are in a vain expectation of fruits from yourselves,—they will never see the sun; and when you have wearied yourselves in such a vain pursuit, you must at length come and begin here. Ye wrong Christ's grace and mercy. This order is suited of purpose for our desperate condition, and yet ye presume to reject it, and seek another. You prescribe to your skilful and tender Physician, that which would undo you. I beseech you, know the original of your miseries, doubts, barrenness, and darkness. Here it is,—you are still puzzling yourselves about grace and duties, how to fill your eyes with these, and ye neglect Christ as your righteousness, as one dead and risen again, and now sitting at God's right hand for us. You must first close with him, as ungodly men. Though you were godly, you must shut your eyes on any such thing, and lay living Jesus upon your dead and benumbed hearts. Answer all your challenges with his absolution, and stand before God, in his clothing. Put his garment immediately on your nakedness and vileness, and we may persuade you, it shall yield you abundant consolation and life. "Because he lives, ye shall live," and walk. If you were more frequent and serious in the consideration of his excellent majesty, of his beautiful and lovely qualifications,

as the Mediator for sinners, and of the precious promises, which are all, "yea and amen," confirmed in him, and less in the vain and unprofitable debates of self-interest, and such like, I am persuaded ye would be more fruitful Christians. This is not as the business of a holiday, to be done at your first coming to Christ, and no more. No, it must run alongst all your life. The aged experienced Christian must come along as an ungodly sinner, to a blessed and living Saviour, and have no other ground of glory or confidence before God, but Christ Jesus crucified.

VII.

Verse 2.—For the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

You know there are two principal things in the preceding verse,—the privilege of a Christian, and the property or character of a Christian. He is one that never enters into condemnation; "He that believeth shall not perish," John iii. 15. And then he is one, "that walks not after the flesh, though he be in the flesh," but in a more elevate way above men, after the guiding and leading of the holy Spirit of God. Now it may be objected in many consciences,—how can these things be? Have not all sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and so the whole world is become guilty before God? Is not every man lying under a sentence of death? "Cursed is he that abides not in all things," &c. How then can he escape condemnation? Again, you speak of walking after the Spirit, as proper to the Christian; but whose walk is not carnal? Who is it that doth not often step aside out of the way, and follow the conduct and counsel of flesh and blood? Is not sin dwelling here in our mortal bodies? Who can say, "my heart or way is clean?" Therefore both that privilege and this property of a Christian, seem to be but big words, no real thing. And indeed I confess the multitude of men hath no other opinion of them, but as fan-

cied imaginary things; few believe the report of the gospel concerning the salvation of elect ones, and few understand what this spiritual walking is. Many conceive it is not a thing that belongs to men, who are led about with passions and affections, but rather to angels or spirits perfected.

However, we have in these words an answer to satisfy both objections. He grants something implicitly, and it is this: It is true indeed, Christians are under a twofold law, captives and bondmen to these. "A law of sin in their members, bringing them in subjection to the lusts of the flesh." Sin hath a powerful dominion and tyranny over every man by nature. It hath a sort of right and power over him. And likewise, every one was under a law of death, the law of God cursing him, and sentencing him to condemnation because of sin. These two were joint conquerors of all mankind. But, saith he, there is a delivery from this bondage. Freedom is obtained to believers by Jesus Christ, and so "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ," and so they walk not after the leading and direction of that law of sin within them, but after the guiding of our blessed Tutor,—the Spirit of God. If you ask how this comes to pass,—by what authority, or law, or power, is this releasement and freedom obtained? Here it is,—"by the law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ." Christ is not an invader, or unjust conqueror, he hath fair law for what he doth, even against those laws which detain unbelievers in bondage. There is a higher and later law on his side, and he hath power and strength to accomplish his design. He opposes law unto law, and life unto death, and spirit unto flesh; a law of spirit unto a law of sin and flesh; a law of life unto a law of death;—in a word, the gospel, or covenant of grace, unto the law, or covenant of works. The powerful and living Spirit of grace that wrought mightily in him, is set fore-against the power of sin and Satan in us, and against us. The one gives him right and title to conquer, the other accomplisheth him

for the work; and by these two, are believers in Jesus Christ made freemen, who were bondmen. That, then, which we would speak from these words, is the common lot of all men by nature, viz. to be under the power of sin, and sentence of death; the special exemption of believers in Christ, and immunity from this, or delivery from it; and then the true ground and cause of this delivery from that bondage;—which three are contained in the words. It is a purpose indeed of a high nature, and of high concernment to us all. Our life and death is wrapt up in this. You may hear many things more gladly, but if you knew it, none so profitable. Therefore let us gather our spirits to the consideration of these particulars.

As to the first, all men are under the bondage of a twofold law,—the law of sin within them, and the law of death without them. Man was created righteous; but, saith the wise man, "he found out many inventions." A sad invention indeed! He found out misery and slavery to himself, who was made free and happy. His freedom and happiness was to be in subjection to his Maker, under the just and holy commands of his Lord, who had given him breath and being. It was no captivity or restraint, to be compassed about with the hedges of the Lord's holy law, no more than it is a restraint on a man's liberty, to have his way hedged in, where he may safely walk, that he may keep himself within it, from pits and snares on every hand. But, alas!—if we may say alas, when we have such a redemption in Jesus Christ,—Adam was not content with that happiness, but seeking after more liberty, he sold himself into the hands of strange lords,—first sin, and then death. "Other lords besides thee, O Lord, have had dominion over us," Isa. xxvi. 13. This is too true in this sense; Adam seeking to be as the Lord himself, lost his own lordship and dominion over all the works of God's hands, and became a servant to the basest and most abominable of all, even that which is most hateful to the Lord,—to sin and death. And this is

the condition we are now born into. Consider it, I pray you,—we are born captives and slaves, the most noble, the most ingenuous, and the most free of us all. Paul speaks of it as a privilege, to be born free; to be free in man's commonwealth. It is counted a dignity to be a free citizen or burgess of a town. Liberty is the great claim of people now-a-days; and indeed it is the great advantage of a people to enjoy that mother, and womb-privilege and right. But, alas! what is all this to be free born in a civil society? It is but the state of a man among men. It reaches no further than the outward man, his life or estate. But here is a matter of greater moment,—know you what state your souls are in? Your souls are incomparably more worth than your bodies, as much as eternity surpasseth this inch of time, or immortality exceeds mortality. Your souls are yourselves, indeed; your bodies are but your house or tabernacle you lodge into for a season. Now then, I beseech you, ask whether you be born free or not. If your souls be slaves, you are slaves indeed; for so the evangelist changeth these. Matthew saith, in chap. xvi. 26, "what hath a man gained, if he lose his soul?" And Luke, chap. ix. 25, saith, "what hath he gained, if he lose himself?" Therefore you are not free indeed, except your souls be free. What is it, I pray you, to enjoy freedom among men? I ask you, what are you before God, whether bond or free? This is the business indeed. The Pharisees pleaded a claim to the liberty and privilege of being Abraham's sons and children, and thought they might hence conclude they were God's children. But our Lord Jesus discovers this mistake, when he tells them of a freedom and liberty that he came to proclaim to men, to purchase to them, and bestow on them. They stumbled at this doctrine. What, say they, talkest thou to us of making us free, we were never in bondage, because we be Abraham's children? This is even the language of our hearts, when we tell you, that ye are born heirs of wrath, and slaves of sin and Satan. Here is the secret whispering of hearts;—

we be Abraham's seed; we were never in bondage to any. We be baptized Christians; we have a church state,—have the privileges, and liberties, not only of subjects in the state, but of members in the church; why sayest thou, we are bondmen? I would wish ye were all free indeed, but that cannot be till you know your bondage. Consider then, I beseech you, that you may be free subjects in a state, and free members in a church, and yet in bondage, under the law of sin and death. This was the mistake; that was a ground of presumption in the Jews, and occasioned their stumbling at this stone of salvation laid in Sion. You think you have church privileges, and what needs more? Be not deceived,—you are servants of sin, and therefore not free. There are two sorts or rather two ranks of persons in God's house,—sons and slaves. The son abides in the house for ever, the slave but for a time. When the time expires, he must go out, or be cast out. The church is God's house, but many are in it, that will not dwell in it. Many have the outward liberties of this house, that have no interest in the special mercies and loving-kindness proper to children. The time will come, that the most part of the visible church, who are baptized, and have eaten with him at his table, and had a kind of friendship to him here, shall be cast out as bondmen, and Isaac only shall be kept within, the child of the promise. The house that is here, hath some inward sanctuary, and some outer porches. Many have access to these, that never enter within the secret of the Lord, and so shall not dwell in the house above. It is not so much the business, who shall enter into the holy hill, but who shall stand and dwell in it. The day of judgment will be a great day of excommunication. O how many thousands will be then cut off from the church of the living God, and delivered over to Satan, because they were really under his power, while they were church-members and Abraham's sons! Let me tell you then, that all of us were once in this state of bondage which Christ speaks of,—"he that committeth sin is the servant

of sin," John viii. 34; "and the servant abides not in the house for ever." So that I am afraid, many of us who are in the visible church, and stand in this congregation, shall not have liberty to stand in the assembly of the first-born, when all the sons are gathered in one to the new Jerusalem. Sin hath a right over us, and it hath a power over us; and therefore it is called a law of sin. There is a kind of authority that it hath over us, by virtue of God's justice, and our own voluntary consent. The Lord in his righteousness hath given over all the posterity of Adam, for his sin, which he sinned, as a common person, representing us,—he hath given us all over to the power of a body of death within us. Since man did choose to depart from his Lord, he hath justly delivered him into the hands of a strange lord to have dominion over him. Transmitting of such an original pollution, to all men, is an act of glorious justice. As he in justice gives men over to the lusts of their own hearts now, for following of these lusts contrary to his will; so was it, at first, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," and that, in God's holy righteousness, sin entered into the world, and had permission of God, to subdue and conquer the world to itself, because man would not be subject to God. But as there is the justice of God in it, so there is a voluntary choice and election, which gives sin a power over us. We choose a strange lord, and he lords it over us. We say to our lusts, come ye and rule over us. We submit our reason, our conscience, and all, to the guidance and leading of our blind affections and passions. We choose our bondage for liberty. And thus sin hath a kind of law over us, by our own consent. It exerciseth a jurisdiction; and when once it is installed in power and clothed with it, it is not so easy again, to put it out of that throne. There is a conspiring, so to speak, of these two, to make out the jurisdiction and authority of sin over us. God gives us over to iniquity and unrighteousness, and we yield ourselves over to it. Rom. vi. 16, 19, "we yield our members servants to iniquity." A

little pleasure or commodity, is the bait that ensnares us to this. We give up ourselves, and join to our idols, and God ratifies it, in a manner, and passeth such a sentence—"Let them alone," he says, "go ye every one and serve your idols." Ezek. xxiii. Since ye would not serve me, be doing,—go serve your lusts, look if they be better masters than I; look what wages they will give you.

Now, let us again consider what power sin hath, being thus clothed with a sort of authority. O but it is mighty, and works mightily in men! It reigns in our mortal bodies, Rom. vi. 12. Here is the throne of sin established, in the lusts and affections of the body, and from hence it emits laws and statutes, and sends out commands to the soul and whole man. Man chose at first to hearken to the counsel of his senses, that said, it was pleasant and good to eat of the forbidden fruit; but that counsel is now turned into a command. Sin hath gotten a sceptre there, to rule over the spirit which was born a free prince. Sin hath conquered all our strength, or we have given up unto it all our strength. Any truth that is in the conscience; any knowledge of God, or religion, all this is incarcerated, detained in prison of unrighteous affections. Sin hath many strongholds and bulwarks in our flesh, and by these, commands the whole spirit and soul in man, and leads captive every thought to the obedience of the flesh. You know how strong it was in holy Paul, Rom. vii.; what a mighty battle and wrestling he had, and how near he was to fainting and giving over. How then must it have an absolute, and sovereign, full dominion over men in nature. There being no contrary principle within, by nature, to debate with it, it rules without much controlment. There may be many convictions of conscience, and sparkles of light against sin, but these are quickly extinguished and buried. Nay, all these principles of light and knowledge in the conscience, do oftentimes strengthen sin, as some things are confirmed, not weakened, by opposition. Unequal and faint opposition strengthens the adversary, as cold, compassing springs, makes

them hotter. So it is here. Sin takes occasion, by the command, "to work all manner of concupiscence," Rom. vii. 8. Without the law, sin is in a manner dead; but when any adversary appears, when our lusts and humours are crossed, then they unite their strength against any such opposition, and bring forth more sinful sin. The knowledge and conscience that many have, serve for nothing, but to make their sins greater; to exasperate and imbitter their spirits and lusts against God. "Why tormentest thou me before the time?" It is a devilish disposition that is in us all;—we cannot endure the light, because our deeds are evil.

Let us but consider these particulars, and we shall know the power and dominion of sin. 1st, Consider the extent of its dominion, both in regard of all men, and all in every man. I say, all men,—there is none of us exempted from it; the most noble, and the most base. Sin is the catholic king, the universal king, or rather Satan, who is the prince of this world, and he rules the world, by this law of sin, which is even the contradiction of the law of God. Who of you believes this, that Satan's kingdom is so spacious?—that it is even over the most part of the visible church? This is the emperor of the world. The Turk vainly arrogates this title to himself, but the devil is truly so, and we have God's own testimony for it. All kings, all nobles, all princes, all people, rich and poor, high and low, are once subjects of this prince, ruled by this black law of sin. O know your condition, whose servants ye are! Think not within yourselves, "we have Abraham for our father,"—we are baptized Christians. No, know that all of us are once the children of Satan, and do his works, and fulfil his will. But moreover, all that is in us, is subject to this law of sin,—all the faculties of the soul. The understanding is under the power of darkness, the affections under the power of corruption, the mind is blinded, and the heart is hardened, the soul is alienated from God, who is its life; all the members and powers of a man yielded up as instruments of unrighteousness, every one to

execute that wicked law, and fulfil the lusts of the flesh. This dominion is over all a man's actions, even those that are in best account and esteem among men. Your honest, upright dealing with men, your most religious performances to God, they are more conformed to the law of sin, than to the law of God,—Hag. ii. 14, "This nation, and the work of their hands, and that which they offer, is unclean." All your works, your good works, are infected with this pollution. Sin hath defiled your persons, and they defile all your actions;—the infection is mutual. These actions again defile your persons still more: "To the impure all things are impure, even their mind and conscience is defiled," Tit. i. 15. Do what you can, ye who are in nature cannot please God; it is but obedience to the law of sin that is in you.

But, 2nd, Consider the intenseness and force of his power, how mighty it is, in working against all oppositions whatsoever, unless it be overcome by almighty power. Nothing but All-might can conquer this power. The spirit that works in men by nature, is of such activity and efficacy, that it drives on men furiously, as if they were possessed to their own ruin. How much hath it of a man's consent! And so it drives him strongly and irresistibly. Much will, desire, and greediness, will make corruption run like a river, over all its banks set in the way thereof,—counsel, persuasion, law, heaven, hell, yet men's corruption must be over all these. Preaching, threatenings, convictions of conscience, are but as flaxen ropes to bind a Samson. Sin within easily breaks them. In a word, no created power is of sufficient virtue to bind the strong man; it must be one mightier than he, and that is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Do ye not see men daily drawn after their lusts, as beasts, following their senses as violently as a horse rusheth to the battle? If there be any gain or advantage to oil the wheels of affection, O how men run head-long! There is no crying will hold them. In sum, sin is become all one with us; it is incorporate into

the man, and become one with his affections, and then these command.

VIII.

Verse 2.—For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

That whereabout the thoughts and discourses of men now run, is freedom and liberty, or bondage and slavery. All men are afraid to lose their liberties, and be made servants to strangers. And indeed liberty, whether national, or personal, even in civil respects, is a great mercy and privilege. But, alas! men know not, neither do they consider what is the ground and reason of such changes, and from what fountain it flows, that a nation of long time free from a foreign yoke, should now be made to submit their necks unto it. Many wonder that our nation, unconquered in the days of ignorance and darkness, should now be conquered in the days of the gospel; and there want not many ungodly spirits, that will rather impute the fault unto the reformation of religion, than take it to themselves. There are many secret heart jealousies among us, that Christ is a hard master, and cannot be served. But would you know the true original of our apparent and threatened bondage? Come and see, come and consider something expressed in these words. All your thoughts are busied about civil liberty, but you do not consider that you are in bondage while you are free, and that to worse masters than you fear. We are under a law of sin and death, that hath the dominion and sway in all men's affections and conversations; and when the glorious liberty of the sons of God is offered unto us in the gospel, when the Son hath come to make us free, we love our own chains, and will not suffer them to be loosed. Therefore it is that a nation that hath despised such a gracious offer of peace and freedom in

Jesus Christ, is robbed and spoiled of peace and freedom. When this law of the Spirit of life in Christ is published, and proclaimed openly unto congregations, unto judicatories, and unto persons, yet few do regard it. The generality are in bondage to a contrary law of sin, and this they serve in the lusts thereof. Yea, which most of all aggravates and heightens the offence, even after we have all of us professed a subjection to the law of God, and to Jesus Christ, the King and Lawgiver, we are in an extraordinary way engaged to the Lord, by many oaths and covenants, to be his people; we did consent that he should be our King, and that we should be ruled in our profession and practice by his word and will, as the fundamental laws of this his kingdom; we did solemnly renounce all strange lords, that had tyrannized over us; and did swear against them, never to yield willing obedience unto them; namely, the lusts of the world, ignorance of God, unbelief, and disobedience. Now what became of all this work, you may know. The generality of all ranks have rebelled against that Lord and Prince, and withdrawn from his allegiance, and revolted unto the same lusts and ways—these same courses against which we had, both by our profession of Christianity and solemn oaths, engaged ourselves. And so men have voluntarily and heartily subjected themselves unto the laws of sin, and desires of the flesh. Hence is the beginning of our ruin. Because we would not serve our own God and Lord in our own land, therefore are so many led away captive to serve strangers in another land, therefore we are like to be captives in our own land. Because we refused homage to our God, and obeyed strange lords within, therefore are we given up to the lust of strangers without.

I would have you thinking, and that seriously, that there are worse masters you serve than those you most hate, and that there is a worse bondage, whereof you are insensible, than that you fear most. You fear strangers, but your greatest evil is within you. You might retire within, and behold worse masters, and more pernicious and

mortal enemies to your well-being. This is the case of all men by nature, and of all men as far as in nature; sin ruling, commanding in them, and lording it over them, and they willingly following after the commandment, and so oppressed and broken in judgment. If you could but rightly look upon other men, you might see, that they who are servants of divers lusts, are not their own men, so to speak; they have not the command of themselves. Look upon a man given to drunkenness, and what a slave is he! Whither doth not his lust drive him? Let him bind himself with resolutions, with vows, yet he cannot be holden by them. Shame before men, loss of estate, decay of health, temporal punishment, nay, eternal, all set together, cannot keep him from fulfilling the desires of that lust, when he hath opportunity. A man given to covetousness, how doth he serve that idol! How doth he forget himself to be a man!—or to have a reasonable soul within him, he is so devoted to it! And thus it is with every man by nature. There may be many petty little gods that he worships upon occasion, but every unrenewed man hath some one thing predominant in him, unto which he hath sworn obedience and devotion. The man most civilized, most abstracted from the grosser outward pollutions,—yet certainly, his heart within is but a temple full of idols, to the love and service of which he is devoted. There are some of the fundamental laws of Satan's kingdom, that rule in every natural man,—either the lust of the eyes, or the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. Every man sacrificeth to one of these his credit and honour, or his pleasure, or his profit. Self, whatever way refined and subtilized in some, yet at best it is but an enemy to God; and without that sphere of self cannot a man act upon natural principles, till a higher Spirit come in, which is here spoken of.

Oh! that you would take this for bondage, to be under this woful necessity of satisfying and "fulfilling the desires of your flesh and mind," Eph. ii. 2. Many account it only liberty and freedom, therefore they look upon the

laws of the Spirit of life as cords and bonds, and consult to cast them off, and cut them asunder. But consider what a wretched life you have with your imperious lusts. The truth is, sin is for the most part its own punishment. I am sure, you have more labour and toil in fulfilling the lusts of sin, than you might have in serving God. Men's lusts are never at quiet, they are continually putting you on service, they are still driving and dragging men headlong, hurrying them to and fro, and they cannot get rest. What is the cause of all the disquiet, disorder, confusion, trouble, and wars in the world? "From whence do contentions arise? Come they not hence," saith James iv. 1, "even of the lusts that war in your members?" It is these that trouble the world, and these are the troublers of Israel's peace. These take away inward peace, domestic peace, and national peace. These lusts, covetousness, ambition, pride, passion, self-love, and such like, do set nation against nation, men and men, people and people, by the ears. These multiply businesses beyond necessity; these multiply cares without profit, and so bring forth vexation and torment. If a man had his lusts subdued, and his affections composed unto moderation and sobriety, O what a multitude of noisome and hurtful cares should he then be freed from; what a sweet calmness should possess that spirit! Will you be persuaded of it, beloved in the Lord, that it were easier to serve the Lord, than to serve your lusts,—that they cost you more labour, disquiet, perplexity, and sorrow, than the Lord's service will; that so you may weary of such masters, and groan to be from under such a law of sin.

But if that will not suffice to persuade you, then consider, in the next room, if you will needs serve a law of sin, you must needs be subject to a law of death. If you will not be persuaded to quit the service of sin, then tell me, what think you of your wages? "The wages of sin is death,"—that you may certainly expect; and can you look and long for such wages? God hath joined these together by a perpetual ordinance. They came into

the world together,—"sin entered, and death by sin;" and they have gone hand in hand together since. And think you to dissolve what God hath joined? Before you go farther, and obey sin more, think, I pray you, what it can give you,—what doth it give you for the present, but much pain, and toil, and vexation, instead of promised pleasure and satisfaction? Sin doth with all men, as the devil doth with some of his sworn vassals and servants. They have a poor wretched life with him. They are wearied and troubled, to satisfy all his unreasonable and imperious commands. He loads them with base service, and they are still kept in expectation of some great reward; but for the present, they have nothing but misery and trouble. And at length he becomes the executioner, and perpetual tormentor of them whom he made to serve him. Such a master is sin, and such wages you must expect. Consider then, what your expectation is, before you go on, or engage further,—death. We are under a law of bodily death, therefore we are mortal. Our house is like a ruinous lodge, that props through, and one day or other it must fall. Sin hath brought in the seeds of corruption into men's nature, which dissolve it, else it had been immortal. But there is a worse death after this, a living death, in respect of which simple death would be chosen rather. Men will rather live very miserably than die. Nature hath an aversion to it,—"skin for skin, and all for life will a man give." Death imports a destruction of being, which every thing naturally seeks to preserve. But O what a dreadful life is it, worse than death, when men will chuse death rather than life! O how terrible will it be to hear that word, "Hills and mountains fall on us, and cover us!" Men newly risen, their bodies and souls meet again after a long separation, and this to be their mutual entertainment one to another, —the body to wish it were still in the dust, and the soul to desire it might never be in the body! Surely if we had so much grace as to believe this, and tremble at it, before we be forced to act it, there were some hope. If we could

persuade ourselves once of this, that the ways of sin, all of them, how pleasant, how profitable soever, whatsoever gain they bring in, whatsoever satisfaction they give, that they are nothing else but "the ways of death, and go down to the chambers of hell;" that they will delude and deceive us, and so in end destroy us. If we might once believe this with our heart, there were some hope that we would break off from them, and choose the untrodden paths of godliness, which are pleasantness and peace. However, this is the condition of all men, once to be under sin, and under a sentence of death for sin. It is the unbelief of this, and a conceit of freedom, that securely and certainly destroys the world, by keeping souls from Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life.

But there is a delivery, and that is the thing expressed in the words. There is freedom from both attainable. And I think, the very hearing of such a thing, that there is a redemption from sin and misery possible, yea, and that some are actually delivered from it; this might stir up in our hearts some holy ambition, and earnestdesire after such a state. How might it awake our hearts after it! But this is the wofulness of a natural condition, that a soul under the power of sin can neither help itself nor rightly desire help from another, because the will is captive too. This makes it a very desperate and remediless business to any human expectation, because such a soul is well-pleased with its own fetters, and loves its own prison, and so can neither long for freedom, nor welcome the Son who is come to make free. But yet, there is a freedom and delivery, and if ye ask who are partakers of it, the text declares it to you,—even those "who are in Jesus Christ, and walk according to the Spirit" of Christ. All those, and those only, who, finding themselves "dead in sins and trespasses," under the power and dominion of sin, and likewise under the sentence of death and condemnation, begin to lift up their heads upon the hope of a Saviour, and to look unto their Redeemer as poor prisoners, whose eyes and looks are strong intreaties, and in-

stead of many requests;—such as give an entire renounce unto their former ways and prevailing lusts, and give up themselves, in testimony of their sense of his unspeakable favour of redemption, to be wholly his, and not their own. There are some souls who are free from the dominion of sin, and from the danger of death, some who were once led about with divers lusts, as well as others, who "walked after the course of this world, and fulfilled the desires of the flesh, and were children of wrath," as well as others; "but now they are quickened in Christ Jesus," and have abandoned their former way. They have another rule, another way, other principles. Their study is now to please God, and grow in holiness. The ways they delighted in, in former times, are now loathsome. They think that a filthy puddle, which they drank greedily of; and now it is all, or their chiefest grief and burden, that so much of that old man must be carried about with them,—and so this expresseth many groans from them with Paul, "Wo is me, miserable man! who shall deliver me?" Such souls are, in a manner, so to speak, half redeemed, who being made sensible of their bondage, groan and pant for a Redeemer. The day of their complete redemption is at hand. All of you are witnesses of this, that there are some thus freed, but they are signs and wonders indeed to the world. Their kinsmen, their acquaintance, their friends and neighbours, wonder what is become of them. They think it strange they walk not, and run not into that same excess of riot with them. But whosoever thou art, that art escaped from under the slavery of sin, wonder at the world, that doth run so madly on its own destruction. Think it strange that thou didst run so long with them, and that all will not run in these pleasant ways with thee. Think it strange, that thou runnest so slowly, when so great a prize is to be obtained,—an immortal and never-fading crown. If mortifying and crucifying the lusts of the flesh, if dying to the world, and to thyself, seem very hard and unpleasant to thee, if it be as "the plucking out of thine eye, and cut-

ting off thine hand;" know then, that corruption is much alive yet, and hath much power in thee. But remember, that if thou canst have but so much grace and resolution, as to kill and crucify these lusts, without foolish and hurtful pity,—if thou canst attain that victory over thyself, thou shall never be a loser. Thou canst not repent it afterward. To die to ourselves and the world, to kill sin within—O that makes way to a life hid from the world, one hour whereof is better than many ages in sinful pleasure! Quicken thyself often with this thought, that there is a true life after such a death, and that thou canst not pass into it, but by the valley of the death of thy lusts. Remember, that thou dost but kill thine enemies, which embrace, that they may strangle thee; and then stir up yourself with this consideration,—the life of sin will be thy death. Better enter heaven without these lusts, than go to hell with them.

IX.

Verse 2.—For the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

That which makes the delivery of men from the tyranny of sin and death, most difficult, and utterly impossible unto nature, is, that sinners have given up themselves unto it, as if it were truly liberty, that the will and affections of men are conquered, and sin hath its imperial throne seated there. Other conquerors invade men against their will, and so they rule against their will. They retain men in subjection by fear, and not by love. And so whenever any occasion offers, they are glad to cast off the yoke of unwilling obedience. But sin hath first conquered men's judgment, by blinding it,—putting out the eye of the understanding, and then invaded the affections of men, drawn them over to its side; and by these, it keeps all in a most willing obedience. Now, what hopes are there then of delivery, when the prisoner accounts his bondage liberty,

and his prison a palace. What expectation of freedom, when all that is within us conspires to the upholding that tyrannous dominion of sin, against all that would cast off its usurpation, as if they were mortal enemies?

Yet there is a delivery possible, but such as would not have entered into the heart of man to imagine; and it is here expressed,—"the law of the Spirit of life," &c. This declares how, and by what means, we may be made free. Not indeed by any power within us, not by any created power without us. Sin is stronger than all these, because its imperial seat is within, far without the reach of all created power. There may be some means used by men, to beat it out of the outworks of the outward man, to chase it out of the external members; some means to restrain it from such gross out-breakings; but there is none can lay siege to the soul within, or storm the understanding and will, where it hath its principal residence. It is inaccessible, and impregnable by any human power. No intreaties or persuasions, no terrors or threatenings can prevail;—it can neither be stormed by violence, nor undermined by skill, because it is within the spirit of the mind; until at length some other spirit stronger than our spirit come; till the Spirit of life which is in Christ, come and bind the strong man, and so make the poor soul free. You heard that we were under a law of death, and under the power of sin. Now there is another law, answering this law, and a power to overcome this power. You may indeed ask, by what law or authority can a sinner that is bound over, by God's justice, unto death and condemnation, be released? Is there any law above God's law, and the sentence of his justice? The apostle answers, that there is a law above it, a law after it,—"the law of the Spirit of life." Jesus Christ opposes law unto law, the law of life unto the law of death; the gospel unto the law, the second covenant unto the first. Thus it is then, "Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, full of grace and truth," did come in man's stead, when the law and sentence of death was passed upon all mankind, and there

was no expectation, from the terms of the first covenant, that there should be any dispensation or mitigation of the rigour of it. He obtains this, that so many as God had chosen unto life, their sins and their punishment might be laid on him. And so he took part of our flesh, for this end, that he might be made a curse for us, and so redeem us from the curse. Thus, having satisfied justice, and fulfilled the sentence of death, by suffering death,—"Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour," and the head of all things. In compensation of this great and weighty work given him by his Father, all judgment is committed to him, and so he sends out and proclaims another law in Zion; another sentence, even of life and absolution, unto all, and upon all them that shall believe in his name. Thus you see the law of death abrogated by a new law of life, because our Lord and Saviour was made under the law of death, and suffered under it, and satisfied it, that all his seed might be freed from it, and might come under a life-giving law. So that it appears to be true, that was said at first, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,"—there is no law, no justice against them.

But then another difficulty, as great as the former, is in the way. Though such a law and sentence of life and absolution be pronounced in the gospel, in Christ's name, yet we are dead in sins and trespasses. We neither know nor feel our misery, nor can we come to a Redeemer. As there was a law of death above our head, so there is a law of sin within our hearts, which rules and commands us; and there is neither will nor ability to escape from under it. It is true, life and freedom is preached in Christ, to all that come to him for life. To all that renounce sin's dominion is remission of sin preached. But here is the greatest difficulty, —how can a dead soul stir, rise, and walk,—how can a slave to sin, and a willing captive, renounce it, when he hath neither to will nor to do? Indeed, if all had been purchased for us, if eternal life and forgiveness of sins had been brought near us, and all the business done to our consent, and

that only wanting; if these had been the terms—I have purchased life, now rise and embrace it of yourselves, truly, it had been an unsuccessful business. Christ had lost all that was given him, if the moment and weight of our salvation had been hung upon our acceptation. Therefore, it is well provided for this also, that there should be a power to overcome this power, a spirit of life in Christ to quicken dead sinners, and raise them up, and draw them to him. And so, the second Adam hath this prerogative beyond the first, that he is not only a living soul in himself, but a quickening Spirit to all that are given him of the Father, 1 Cor. xv. 45. So then, as Christ Jesus hath law and right on his side, to free us from death, so he hath virtue and power in him to accomplish our delivery from sin. As he hath fair law to loose the chains of condemnation, and to repeal the sentence passed against us, without prejudice to God's justice, he having fully satisfied the same in our name, so he hath sufficient power given him, to loose the fetters of sin from off us. When he hath paid the price, and satisfied the Father, so that justice can crave nothing, yet he hath one adversary to deal with. Satan hath sinners bound with the cords of their own lusts, in a prison of darkness and unbelief. Jesus Christ therefore comes out to conquer this enemy, and to redeem his elect ones from that unjust usurpation of sin,—to bring them out of the prison by the strong hand. And therefore, he is one mighty and able to save to the uttermost; he hath might to do it, as well as right to it.

Consider, then, my beloved, these two things, which are the breasts of our consolation, and the foundation of our hope. We are once lost and utterly undone, both in regard of God's justice, and our own utter inability to help ourselves, which is strengthened by our unwillingness, and thus made a more desperate business. Now, God hath provided a suitable remedy; "he hath laid help on one that is mighty," indeed, who hath almighty power; and by his power he first conflicted with the punishment

of our sins, and with his Father's wrath, and hath overcome, discharged, and satisfied that, and so hath purchased a right unto us, to give salvation to whom he will. He conquered, and by his power obtains this supreme authority of life and death.

Now, having this authority established in his person, the next work is to apply this purchase,—actually to confer this life. And therefore he hath almighty power to raise up dead sinners; "to create us again to good works;" to redeem us from the tyranny of sin and Satan, whose slaves we are. He hath a Spirit of life, which he communicates to his seed; he breathes it into those souls that he died for, and dispossesseth that powerful corruption that dwells in us. Hence it comes to pass, that they walk after the Spirit, though they be in the flesh; because the powerful Spirit of Christ hath entered, and taken possession of their spirits. Isa. lix. 20, 21.

Let us not be discouraged in our apprehensions of Christ. When we look on our ruinous and desperate estate, let us not conclude, it is past hope, and past his help too. We do proclaim, in the name of Jesus Christ, that there is no sinner, howsoever justly under a sentence of death and damnation, but they may in him find a relaxation from that sentence, and that without the impairing of God's justice. And this is a marvellous ground of comfort, that may establish our souls, 1 John i. 9; even this, that law and justice is upon Christ's side, and nothing to accuse or plead against a sinner that employs him for his advocate. But know this also, that you are not delivered from death, that you may live under sin; nay, you are redeemed from death, that you may be freed from the law of sin. But that must be done by his almighty Spirit, and cannot be otherways done.

I know not whether of these is matter of greatest comfort,—that there is in Christ a redemption from the wrath of God and from hell; and that there is a redemption too, from sin, and corruption which dwells within us. But sure I am, both of them will be most sweet and

comfortable to a believer; and without both, Christ were not a complete Redeemer, nor we completely redeemed. Neither would a believing soul, in which there is any measure of this new law and divine life, be satisfied without both these. Many are miserably deluded in their apprehensions of the Gospel. They take it up thus, as if it were nothing but a proclamation of freedom from misery, from death and damnation; and so the most part catch at nothing else in it, and from thence take liberty to walk after their former lusts and courses. This is the woful practical use that the generality of hearers make of the free intimation of pardon, and forgiveness of sin, and delivery from wrath. They admit some general notion of that, and stop there, and examine not what further is in the gospel; and so you will see the slaves of sin professing a kind of hope of freedom from death,—the servants and vassals of corruption, who walk after the course of this world, and fulfil the lusts and desires of their mind and flesh, yet fancying a freedom and immunity from condemnation,—men living in sin, yet thinking of escaping wrath;—which dreams could not be entertained in men, if they did drink in all the truth, and open both their ears to the gospel; if our spirits were not narrow and limited, and so excluded the one half of the gospel, that is, our redemption from sin. There is too much of this, even among the children of God,—a strange narrowness of spirit, which admits not whole and entire truth. It falls out often, that when we think of delivery from death and wrath, we forget in the mean time the end and purpose of that, which is, that we may be freed from sin, and serve the living God without fear. And if at any time we consider, and busy our thoughts about freedom from the law of sin, and victory over corruption, such is the scantiness of room and capacity in our spirits, that we lose the remembrance of delivery from death and condemnation in Christ Jesus. Thus we are tossed between two extremes—the quicksands of presumption and wantonness, and the rocks of unbelief and despair or dis-

couragement, both of which do kill the Christian's life, and make all to fade and wither. But this were the way, and only way, to preserve the soul in good ease,—even to keep these two continually in our sight, that we are redeemed from death and misery in Christ, and that not to serve ourselves, or to continue in our sins, but that we may be redeemed from that sin that dwells in us, and that both these are purchased by Jesus Christ, and done by his power,—the one in his own person, the other by his Spirit within us. I would have you correcting your misapprehensions of the gospel. Do not so much look on victory and freedom from sin as a duty and task, though we be infinitely bound to it; but rather as a privilege and dignity conferred upon us by Christ. Look not upon it, I say, only as your duty, as many do; and by this means are discouraged from the sight of their own infirmity and weakness, as being too weak for such a strong party. But look upon it is as the one half, and the greater half, of the benefit conferred by Christ's death,—as the greater half of the redemption which the Redeemer, by his office, is bound to accomplish. He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities; "with him is plenteous redemption," Psal. cxxx. 7, 8. This is the plenty, this is the sufficiency of it,—that he redeems not only from misery, but from iniquity, and that all iniquities. I would not desire a believer's soul to be in a better posture here away, than this,—to be looking upon sin indwelling as his bondage, and redemption from it as freedom; to account himself in so far free, as the free Spirit of Christ enters and writes that free law of love and obedience in his heart, and bolts out these base characters of the law of sin. It were a good temper to be groaning for the redemption of the soul; and why doth a believer groan for the redemption of the body, but because he shall then be freed wholly from the law of sin, and from the presence of sin? I know not a greater argument, to a gracious heart, to subdue his corruption, and strive for freedom from the law of sin, than the freedom obtained from the

law of death. Nor is there any clearer argument and evidence of a soul delivered from death, than to strive for the freedom of the spirit from the law of sin. These jointly help one another. Freedom from death will raise up a Christian's heart to aspire to a freedom and liberty from sin; and again, freedom from sin will witness and evidence that such an one is delivered from death. When freedom from death is an inducement to seek after freedom from sin, and freedom from sin a declaration of freedom from death, then all is well; and indeed thus it will be in some measure with every soul that is quickened by this new law of the Spirit of life, for it is the entry of this that expels its contrary, the law of sin. And indeed the law must enter; the command and the promise must enter into the soul, and the affections of the soul be enlivened thereby, or rather the soul changed into the similitude of that mould, or else the having of it in a book, or in one's memory and understanding, will never make him the richer or freer. A Christian looks to the pattern of the law, and the word of the gospel without; but he must be changed into the image of it, by beholding it; and so he becomes a living law to himself. The Spirit writes these precepts and practices of Christ's, in which he commands imitation, upon the fleshly tables of the heart. And now the law is not a rod above his head, as above a slave; but it is turned into a law of love within his heart, and hath something like a natural instinct in it. All that men can do, either to themselves or others, will not purchase the least measure of freedom from predominant corruptions; cannot deliver you from your sins, till this free Spirit, that blows where he pleases, come. It is our part to hoise up sails, and wait for the wind; to use means, and wait on him in his way and order. But all will be in vain, till this stronger one come and cast out the strong man; till this arbitrary and free wind blow from heaven, and fill the sails.

X.

Verse 3.—For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

The greatest design that ever God had in the world, is certainly the sending of his own Son into the world. And it must needs be some great business, that drew so excellent and glorious a person out of heaven. The plot and contrivance of the world was a profound piece of wisdom and goodness; the making of men after God's image, was done by a high and glorious counsel: "Let us make man after our image." There was something special in this expression, importing some peculiar excellency in the work itself, or some special depth or design about it. But what think you of this consultation,—let one of us be made man, after man's image and likeness. That must be a strange piece of wisdom and grace: "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh." No wonder though Paul cried out, as one swallowed up with this mystery; for indeed it must be some odd matter, beyond all that is in the creation, wherein there are many mysteries, able to swallow up any understanding, but that in which they were first formed. This must be the chief of the works of God, the rarest piece of them all,—God to become man, the Creator of all to come in the likeness of a creature, —he by whom all things were created,—and do yet consist, to come in the likeness of the most wretched of all. Strange, that we do not dwell more, in our thoughts and affections, on this subject. Either we do not believe it, or if we did, we could not but be ravished with admiration at it. John, the beloved disciple, who was often nearest unto Christ, dwelt most upon this, and made it the subject of his preaching; "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, and seen, and handled," &c. 1 John i. 1. He speaks of that mystery, as if he were embracing Jesus Christ in his arms, and holding him out

to others, saying, " Come and see." This divine mystery, is the subject of those words read, but the mystery is somewhat unfolded and opened up to you in them, yet so as it will not diminish, but increase the wonder of a believing soul. It is ignorance that magnifies other mysteries, which vilify through knowledge ; but it is the true knowledge of this mystery that makes it the more wonderful, whereas ignorance only makes it common and despicable.

There are three things then, of special consideration in the words, which may declare and open unto you something of this mystery:

First, What was the ground and reason, or occasion of the Son's sending into the world ; next, What the Son, being sent, did in the world ; and the third, For what end and use it was,—what fruit we have by it.

The ground and reason of God sending his Son, is, because there was an impossibility upon the law to save man, which impossibility was not the law's fault, but man's defect, by reason of the weakness and impotency of our flesh to fulfil the law. Now, God having chosen some to life, and man having put this obstruction and impediment in his own way, which made it impossible for the law to give him life, though it was first given out as the way of life ; therefore, that God should not fail in his glorious design of saving his chosen, he chose to send his own Son, in the likeness of flesh, as the only remedy of the law's impossibility. That which Christ, being sent into the likeness of flesh, did, is the condemning of sin in the flesh, by a sacrifice offered for sin,—even the sacrifice of his own body upon the cross. He came in the likeness, not of the flesh simply, for he was really a man ; but in the likeness of sinful flesh,—though without sin yet like a sinner,—as to the outward appearance, a sinner, because subject to all those infirmities and miseries which sin did first open a door for. Sin was the inlet of afflictions, of bodily infirmities and necessities, of death itself; and when the floods of these did overflow Christ's human nature, it was a great presumption to the world, who look

and judge according to the outward appearance, that sin was the sluice opened to let in such an inundation of calamity. Now, he being thus in the likeness of a sinner, though not a sinner,—he, for sin, that is, because of sin, that had entered upon man, and made life impossible to him by the law; by occasion of that great enemy of God which had conquered mankind, he condemned sin in his flesh, he overthrew it in its plea and power against us. He condemned that which condemned us, overcame it in judgment, and made us free. By sustaining the curse of it in his flesh, he cut off all its plea against us. This is the great work and business, which was worthy of so noble a messenger, his own Son, sent to conquer his greatest enemy that he hates most. And then, in the third place, you see what benefit or fruit redounds to us by it: what was the end and purpose of it;—verse 4, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us:" that seeing it was impossible for us to fulfil the righteousness of the law, and so become impossible to the law to fulfil our reward of life, it might be fulfilled by him in our name; and so the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us by Christ, the reward also of eternal life might be fulfilled by the law to us,—he having removed the impediment of our weakness, it might be not only possible, but certain to us.

You would consider then, the reason of Christ's coming. God made at first a covenant with man, promising him life, upon perfect obedience to his law; and threatening death and damnation upon the transgression thereof. You see then, what was the way of life to Adam in the state of innocency. He was made able to satisfy the law with obedience, and the law was abundantly able to satisfy him, by giving life unto him. God's image upon man's soul instructed him sufficiently for the one, and the Lord's promise made to him, was as sufficient to accomplish the other; so that there was no impossibility then upon the law, by reason of the strength which God gave man. But it continued not long so. Sin entering upon man, utterly

disabled him; and because the strength of that covenant consisted in that mutual and joint concurrence of God's promise and man's obedience—this being broken, (the one party falling off) that life and salvation becomes impossible to the promise alone to perform. It is sin that is the weakness and impotency of man. This is the disease which hath consumed his strength, and concluded man under a twofold impossibility; an impossibility to satisfy the curse, and an impossibility to obey the command. There are three things in the covenant of works,—a command of obedience, and a threatening of wrath and condemnation upon disobedience, and a promise of life upon obedience. Sin hath disabled us every way. In relation to the curse and threatening, man cannot satisfy it—no price, no ransom found sufficient for the soul, for the redemption of it is precious, and ceaseth for ever. That curse hath infinite wrath in it, which must needs swallow up finite man. And then in relation to the command, there is such a diminution of all the powers of the soul, such a corruption and defilement, by reason of the first sin, that that wherein man's strength lay, which was God's image, is cut off and spoiled; so that henceforth it is become impossible to yield any acceptable obedience to the commandment. And hence it is, from our impossibility to obey in time to come, that there is a holy and faultless impossibility upon the promise, to give life unto mankind. So you see that the law cannot do it, because of our weakness. If either man, while he was made upright, had continued in obedience, or man now fallen from uprightness, could satisfy for the fault done, and walk without any blemish in time coming, then it were feasible for the law to give life to us. But the one was not done, and the other now cannot be done; and so the impossibility of life by works, is redounded upon ourselves, who would not when we could, and now neither will nor can obey. Thus we may see clearly, that all mankind must needs perish, for any thing that man can do; and according to that first transaction of God with man, unless some other way and device be found out, which

indeed was far from the eyes of all living, without the reach of their invention or imagination. I believe if all the creatures, higher or lower, that have any reason, had convened to consult of this business, how to repair that breach made in the creation by man's sin, they might have vexed their brains, and racked their inventions unto all eternity, and yet never have fallen upon any probable way of making up this breach. They might have taken up a lamentation, not as the bemoaners of Babylon's ruin, —" we would have healed thee, and thou wouldst not;"— but rather thus,—we would heal thee, but we could not, and thou wouldst not. This design, which is here mentioned of repairing the breach, by destroying that which made it, sin, lay hid in the depth of God's wisdom, till it pleased himself to vent and publish it unto poor forlorn and desperate man, who, out of despair of recovery, had run away to hide himself. A poor shift indeed, for him to think that he could hide himself from him to whom darkness is as light, and to flee from him whose kingdom is over all, and who is present in all the corners of his universal kingdom,—in hell, in heaven, in the utmost corners of the earth. But this silly invention shews how hopeless the case was.

Though this be the case and condition of man by nature, yet strange it is, to see every man by nature attempting his own delivery; and fancying a probability, yea, a certainty of that which is so impossible, that is, an attaining of life by ourselves, according to the law and first covenant of works. Though our strength be gone, yet, like Samson, men rise up and think to walk and rouse up themselves as in former times, as if their strength were yet in them, and many never perceive that it is gone, till they be laid hold on by Satan according to the law's injunction, and bound in the chains of everlasting darkness. But then, alas! it is too late, for they cannot save themselves, and the season of a Saviour is gone. And this, no doubt, will be the accession of the bitterness and torment that damned souls shall be into,—that they dreamed of attaining life by

a law, that now is nothing but a ministration of death; —that they lost life by seeking their own righteousness; and made the law more able to condemn them, by their apprehending in themselves an ability to satisfy it, and by resting in a form of obedience to it. There is something natural in it. Adam and all his posterity were once to be saved this way,—so the terms run at first, "do this and live." No wonder that something of that impression be retained; but that which was a virtue in Adam, while he retained integrity, and fulfilled his duty, is a mighty fault, and presumptuous madness in us, who have fallen from that blessed estate. If man, doing his duty, expected a reward, according to the promise, it was commendable; but for man, now rebellious and stubborn, and come short of the glory of God, to look for a reward from God, against whom he warreth continually, and that for rebellion and enmity, it is damnable. But besides this, I think this principle of self-righteousness is much corrupted in man now, by what it was in Adam. I conceive, though Adam looked for life upon obedience, according to the promise, yet he rested not on, and trusted not in, his obedience. I believe, a holy and righteous man would be a humble man too, and would rather glory in God's grace than in his own works. The sense of a free and undeserved promise, would not suffer him to reflect so much upon his own obedience, or put such a price upon it. But now, it is conjoined with unmeasurable pride, and arises only from self-love. There is no ground of man's looking to be saved by his own doings, but the inbred pride and self-love of the heart, together with the ignorance of a better righteousness. Adam hid himself among the trees, and covered his nakedness with leaves, and truly the shift of the most part is no better. How vain and empty things do men trust unto, and from them conclude an expectation of eternal life? The most part think to be safe in the midst or thick of the trees of the church. If they be in the throng of a visible church, and adorned with church privileges, as baptism, hearing the word, and such like, they do per-

suade themselves all will be well. Some have civility, and a blameless conversation before men, and with such acts of righteousness, or rather wants of some gross outbreakings, do many cover their nakedness. If there be yet a larger and finer garment of profession of religion, and some outward performances of service to God, and duties to men, O then, men do enforce upon their own hearts the persuasion of heaven, and think their nakedness cannot be seen through it! These are the coverings, these are the grounds of claim and title, that men have to eternal life, and in the meantime they are ignorant of that large glorious robe of righteousness, which Christ by his obedience and sufferings, did weave for naked sinners.

But as the impossibility of the law's saving us, by reason of the weakness of the flesh, was the ground and occasion of Christ's coming into the flesh for to supply that defect, and take away that impossibility; so the sense and sight of this impossibility in us to satisfy and fulfil the law, and of the law to give life, is the very ground and reason of a soul's coming to Jesus Christ for the supplying of this want. As the Son should not have come in the likeness of sinful flesh, unless it had been otherwise impossible by man's doing or suffering, that life should be obtained; so will not a soul come to Christ, the Son of God, through the vail of his flesh, until it discern and feel that it is otherwise impossible to satisfy the law or attain life. That was the impulsive cause, (if we may say that there was any cause beside his love) why Christ came,—even man's misery, and remediless misery. And this is the strong motive and impulsive, that drives a poor sinner unto Jesus Christ,—the sense and impression of its desperate and lost estate without him. As there was first sin, and then a Saviour dying for sin, because nothing else could suffice, so there must be in the soul, first, the apprehension of sin, and that remediless sin, sin incurable by any created power or act; and then a sight of a Saviour coming to destroy sin and the works of the devil, and destroying it by dying for it. There is no em-

ployment for this Physician upon every slight apprehension of a wound or sickness, till it be found incurable, and help sought elsewhere be seen to be in vain. Indeed, upon the least apprehension of sin and misery, men ought to come to Christ. We shall not set or prescribe any measure of conviction to exclude you, if you can but come to him indeed. Upon the least measure of it, you will not be cast out, according to his own word; but as certain it is, that men will not come to this Physician, till they find no other can save them. These two things I wish were deeply and seriously thought upon,—that you cannot satisfy God's justice for the least point of guilt; and then, that you cannot do any thing in obedience to please God. There is a strange inconsideration; yea, I may say, ignorance among us. When you are challenged and convinced of sin, (as there is no conscience so benumbed, but in some measure it accuseth every man of many wrongs,) what is the course you fall on to pacify it or please God? Indeed, if you can get any shadow of repentance, if it were but a bare acknowledgment of the fault, you excuse yourselves in your own consciences, and answer the accusation by it. Either some other good works formerly done occur to you, or some resolution for amendment in time coming. And this you think shall pacify God and satisfy justice. But alas! you are far from the righteousness of God, and you do err even in the very foundation of religion. These are but sparks of your own kindling, and for all these, you shall lie down in darkness and sorrow. These are but the vain expiations and excuses of natural consciences, which are led to some sense of a deity by the law written in their heart. But consider this once,—you must first satisfy the curse of the law which you are under, before you can be in any capacity to please him by new obedience. Now, if you should undertake to pay for your former breaches of the law, that will eternally ruin you; and therefore, you see the punishment is lengthened throughout eternity to them who have this to undergo alone. Go then, and first suffer the

eternal wrath of an infinite God, and then come and offer obedience if thou can. But now, thou art in a double error, both of which are damnable; one is, thou thinkest thou art able, by consideration and resolution, to perform some acceptable obedience to God; another, that performance, and amending in time coming, will expiate former transgressions. If either of these were true, Christ needed not to have come in the likeness of sinful flesh, because it had been possible for the law to save thee. But now, the truth is, such is the utter disability and impotency of man through sin, that he can neither will nor do the least good, truly good and pleasant to God. His nature and person being defiled, all he doth is unclean. And then, suppose that it were possible that man could do any thing in obedience to his commands, yet it being unquestionable, that all have sinned, satisfaction must first be made to God's threatening, "thou shalt die," before obedience be acceptable, and that is impossible too. This then, I leave upon your consciences, beseeching you to lay to heart the impossibility you are encompassed with on both hands;—justice requiring a ransom and you have none, and justice requiring new obedience again, and you can give none; old debts urging you, and new duty pressing you, and ye alike disabled for both; that so finding yourselves thus environed with indigency and impossibility within, you may be constrained to flee out of yourselves unto him that is both able and willing. This is not a superficial business, as you make it. It is not a matter of fancy, or memory, or expression, as most make it. Believe me, it is a serious business, a soul-work, such an exercise of spirit as useth to be when the soul is between despair and hope. Impossibility within, driving a soul out of itself, and possibility, yea, certainty of help without, even in Christ drawing a soul in to him. Thus is the closure made, which is the foundation of our happiness.

XI.

Verse 3.—For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

For what purpose do we meet thus together? I would we knew it,—then it might be to some better purpose. In all other things we are rational, and do nothing of moment, without some end and purpose. But, alas! in this matter of greatest moment, our going about divine ordinances, we have scarce any distinct or deliberate thought of the end and rise of them. Sure I am, we must all confess this, that all other businesses in our life are almost impertinent to the great end, the salvation of our souls, in respect of [*i. e.* in comparison with] these, in which God in a manner trysts with men, and comes to dwell with them. These have the nearest and most immediate connection with God's glory and our happiness; and yet so wretched and unhappy are we, that we study and endeavour a kind of wisdom and diligence in other petty things, which are to perish with the using, and have no great reach to make our condition either better or worse; and yet we have no wisdom, nor consideration, or attention to this great and momentous matter,—the salvation of our souls. Is it not high time we were shaken out of our empty, vain, and unreasonable custom, in going about such solemn duties, when the wrath of God is already kindled, and his mighty arm is shaking terribly the earth, and shaking us out of all our nests of quietness and consolation, which we did build in the creature?* God calls for a reasonable service, but I must say, the service of the most is an unreasonable and brutish kind of work,—

* It should be remembered that Binning lived and preached at a time of great national trouble—the time of the death of Charles I., and while Cromwell was prosecuting his career of conquest in Scotland. His works contain occasional allusions to the topics, opinions, and transactions of the times.

little or no consideration of what we are about; little or no purpose, or aim at any real soul advantage. Consider, my beloved, what you are doing, undoing yourselves with ignorance of your own estate, and unacquaintedness with a better; whence it comes, that you live contented in your misery, and have no lively stirrings after this blessed remedy. That for which we met together is to learn these two things, and always to be learning them,—to know sensibly our own wretched misery and that blessed remedy which God hath provided. It is the sum of the Scriptures, and we desire daily to lay it out before you, if at length it may please the Lord to awake you out of your dream, and give you the light of his salvation.

You hear of a weakness of the flesh; but if you would understand it aright, it is not properly and simply a weakness. That supposeth always some life, and some strength remaining. It is not like an infirmity, that only indisposeth to wonted action, in the wonted vigour; but it is such a weakness, as the apostle elsewhere, Eph. ii. 1, calls deadness. It is such a weakness, as may be called wickedness, yea, enmity to God, as it is here. Our souls are not diseased properly, for that supposeth there is some remnant of spiritual life, but they are dead in sins and trespasses. And so it is not infirmity but impossibility,—such a weakness as makes life and salvation impossible by us, both utter unwillingness and extreme inability. These two concur in all mankind,—no strength to satisfy justice, or obey the law, and no willingness either. There is a general practical mistake in this. Men conceive, that their natures are weak to good, but few apprehend the wickedness and enmity that is in them to God and all goodness. All will grant some defect and inability, and it is a general complaint. But to consider that this inability is an impossibility, that this defect is a destruction of all spiritual good in us,—the saving knowledge of this is given to few, and to those only whose eyes the Spirit opens. There may be some strugglings and wrestlings of natural spirit to help themselves, and upon the apprehen-

sion of their own weakness, to raise up themselves by serious consideration, and earnest diligence, to some pitch of serving God, and to some hope of heaven. But I do suspect that it proceeds in many from the want of this thorough and deep conviction of desperate wickedness. Few really believe that testimony which God hath given of man,—he is not only weak, but wicked, and not only so, but desperately wicked. And that is not all,—the heart is deceitful too, and to complete the account, "deceitful above all things," Jer. xvii. 15. A strange character of man, given by him that formed the spirit of man within, and made it once upright, and so knows best how far it hath departed from the first pattern. O who of us believes this in our hearts! But that is the deceitfulness of our hearts, to cover our desperate wickedness from our own discerning, and flatter ourselves with self-pleasing thoughts. If once this testimony were received, that the weakness of the flesh is a desperate wickedness, such a wretched and accursed condition, as there is no hope therein, as is incurable to any created power, and makes us incurable, and certainly lost,—then, I say, the deceitfulness of the heart were in some measure cured. Believe the desperate wickedness of your natures, and then you have perceived the deceitfulness of your hearts to your own advantage; then you have known that which none can know aright, till the searcher of the heart and reins reveal it unto them.

Thus man stands environed with impossibilities. His own weakness and wickedness, and the law's impossibility by reason of that,—these do shut up all access to the tree of life, and are instead of a flaming sword to guard it. Our legs are cut off by sin, and the law cannot help us; nay, our life is put out, and the law cannot quicken us. It declares our duty, but gives no ability; it teacheth well, but it cannot make us learn. While we are in this posture, God himself steps in to succour miserable undone man; and here is the way,—he sends his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and grace and truth come by him,

which do remove those impediments that stopped all access to life.

This is a high subject, but it concerns the lowest and most wretched amongst us; and that is indeed the wonder of it, that there should be such a mystery, such a depth in this work of redemption of poor sinners, so much business made, and such strange things done for repairing our ruins. In the consideration of this we may borrow that meditation of the Psalmist's, Psal. viii. 4, "Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest thus magnify him; and make him not a little lower than the angels, but far higher?" "For he took not on him the nature of angels," Heb. ii. 14, 16; but took part with the poor children of flesh and blood. This deserves a pause;—we shall stay a little, and view it more fully in the steps and degrees that this mystery rises and ascends up by. But, oh! for such an ascending frame of heart as this deserves. It is a wonder it doth not draw us upward beyond our own element,—it is a subject of such admiration in itself, and so much concernment to us.

Every word hath a weight in it, and a peculiar emphasis. There is a gradation that the mystery goes upon till it come to the top. Every word hath a degree or stop in it, whereby it rises higher. "God sent,"—that is very strange; but God sent "his Son,"—is most strange. But go on, and it is still stranger,—"in the likeness of flesh," and that sinful flesh, &c. In all which degrees you see God is descending and coming lower and lower, but the mystery ascends and goes higher and higher; the lower God comes down, the wonder rises up. Still the smaller and meaner that God appears in the flesh, the greater is the mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh."

If you would rise up to the sensible and profitable understanding of this mystery, you must first descend into the depths of your own natural wretchedness and misery, in which man was lying, when it pleased God to come so low to meet him, and help him. I say you must first go down that way in the consideration of it, and then you

shall ascend to the use and knowledge of this mystery of godliness.

God's sending, hath some weight of wonder in it, at the very apprehension of it. If you did but know who he is, and what we are, a wonder it had been, that he had suffered himself to be sent unto by us, that any message, any correspondence should pass between heaven and earth, after so foul a breach of peace and covenant by man on earth. Strange, that heaven was not shut up from all intercourse with that accursed earth. If God had sent out an angel to destroy man, as he sent to destroy Jerusalem, 1 Chron. xxi. 15,—if he had sent out his armies to kill those his enemies, who had renounced the yoke of his obedience, it had been justice, Matth. xxi. 41; xxii. 7. If he had sent a cruel messenger against man, who had now acted so horrid a rebellion, it had been no strange thing, as he did send an angel with a flaming sword to encompass the tree of life. He might have enlarged that angel's commission, to take vengeance on man: and this is the wonder, he did not send after this manner. But what heart could this enter into? Who could imagine such a thing as this? God to send, and to send for peace to his rebellious footstool! Man could not have looked for acceptance before the throne, if he had presented and sent first up supplications and humble cries to heaven; and therefore finding himself miserable, you see he is at his wits end, he is desperate, and gives it over, and so flies away to hide himself, certainly expecting that the first message from heaven should be to arm all the creatures against him, to destroy him. But, O what a wonderful, yet blessed surprisal! God himself comes down, and not for any such ends as vengeance, though just, but to publish and hold forth a covenant of reconciliation and peace, to convince man of sin, and to comfort him with the glad tidings of a Redeemer, of one to be sent in the likeness of flesh. It is the grandeur and majesty of kings and great men, to let others come to them with their petitions; and it is accounted a rare thing if they be accessible and affable.

But, that the Lord of lords, and King of kings, who sitteth in the circle of the heavens, and before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as poor grasshoppers, or crawling worms, "about whose throne, there are ten thousand times ten thousand glorious spirits ministering unto him," as Daniel saw him, chap. vii. 9, 10,—that such a one should not only admit such as we to come to him, and offer our suits to his Highness, but himself first to come down unto Adam, and offer peace to him, and then send his own Son! And what were we, that he should make any motion about us, or make any mission to us? Rom. v. 10. "While we were yet enemies,"—that we were when he sent. O how hath his love triumphed over his justice! But needed he fear our enmity, that he should seek peace? No ways; one look of his angry countenance, would have looked us unto nothing,—"Thou lookest upon me, and I am not;" one rebuke of his for iniquity, would have made our beauty consume as the moth, far more the stroke of his hand had consumed us, Psalm xxxix. 11. But that is the wonder indeed,—"while we were yet enemies;" and weak too, neither able to help ourselves, nor hurt him in the least, and so could do nothing to allure him, nothing to terrify him, nothing to engage his love, nothing to make him fear; yet, then he makes this motion, and mission to us, "God sending," &c.

God sending, and sending his own Son, that is yet a step higher. Had he sent an angel, it had been wonderful, one of those ministering spirits about the throne being far more glorious than man. "But God so loved the world, that he sent his Son." Might he not have done it by others? But he had a higher project; and verily, there is more mystery in the end and manner of our redemption, than difficulty in the thing itself. No question, he might have enabled the creature, by his almighty power, to have destroyed the works of the devil, and might have delivered captive man some other way. He needed not, for any necessity lying upon him, to go such a round

as the Father to give to the Son, and the Son to receive,—as God to send, and the Son to be sent. Nay, he might have spared all pains, and without any messenger, immediately pardoned man's sin, and adopted him to the place of sons. Thus he had done the business, without his Son's, or any others travail and labour in blood and suffering. But this profound mystery, in the manner of it, declares the highness and excellency of the end God proposed, and that is the manifestation of his love; "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us," 1 John. iii. 1. "And in this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world," 1 John iv. 9. And truly for such a design and purpose, all the world could not have contrived such a suitable and excellent mean as this. Nothing besides this could have declared such love. There is no expression of love imaginable to this,—to give his Son, and only begotten Son for us. It had been enough, out of mere compassion, to have saved us, however it had been. But if he had given all, and done all besides this, he had not so manifested the infinite fulness of love. There is no gift so suitable to the greatness and magnificence of his majesty, as this,—one "that thought it no robbery to be equal with himself." Any gift had been infinitely above us, because from him; but this is not only infinitely above us, but equal to himself, and fittest to declare himself.

But then, there is yet a higher rise of the mystery, or a lower descent of God: for 'tis all one, God descending is the wonder ascending,—he sent his Son. Man's admiration is already exhausted in that. But if there were any thing behind, this which follows would consume it,—in the flesh. If he had sent his own Son, might he not have sent him in an estate and condition suitable to his glory, as it became the Prince and Heir of all things, him by whom all were created and do subsist. Nay, but he is sent, and that in a state of humiliation and condescendency, infinitely below his own dignity. That ever he was made a creature, that the Maker of all should be sent in the form

of any thing he had made, O what a disparagement! There is no such distance between the highest prince on the throne, and the basest beggar on the dunghill, as between the only begotten of the Father, who is the brightness of his glory, and the most glorious angel that ever was made. And yet, it would be a wonder to the world, if a king should send his son in the habit and state of a beggar, to call in the poor, and lame, and blind, to the fellowship of his kingdom. It had been a great mystery then, if God had been manifested in the nature of angels, a great abasement of his majesty. But, O what must it be for God, to be manifested in the flesh, in the basest, naughtiest, and most corruptible of all the creatures, even the very dregs of the creation, that have sunk down to the bottom! "All flesh is grass;" and what more withering and fading, even the flower and perfection of it? Isa. xl. 6. Dust it is, and what baser? Gen. xviii. 27. And corruption it is, and what viler? 1 Cor. xv. 44. And yet, God sent his Son in the flesh. Is this a manifestation? Nay, rather, it is a hiding and obscuration of his glory. It is the putting on of a dark vail to eclipse his brightness. Yet manifested he is, as the intendment of the work he was about required,—manifested to reproach and ignominy for our sin. This is one, and a great point of Christ's humiliation,—that "he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16.

But yet, to complete this mystery more, the Son descends a third step lower, that the mystery may ascend so much the higher;—in the likeness of flesh? Not so, but in the likeness of sinful flesh. If he had appeared in the prime flower and perfection of flesh, in the very goodliness of it, yet it had been a disparagement. If he had come down as glorious as he once went up, and now "sits at the right hand of the majesty on high;" if he had been always in that resplendent habit he put on in his transfiguration; that had been yet an abasement of his majesty. But, to come in the likeness of sinful flesh, though not a sinner, yet in the likeness of a sinner,—so like as

that, touching his outward appearance, no eye could discern any difference, compassed about with all those infirmities and necessities, which are the followers and attendants of sin in us; "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs;" a man who all his lifetime had intimate acquaintance, and familiarity with grief. Grief and he were long acquaintance, and never parted till death parted them. Nay, not only was he, in his outward estate, subject to all those miseries and infirmities, unto which sin subjects other men, but was something beyond all, "his visage more marred than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men," Isa. lii. 14; and therefore he was a hissing and astonishment to many. He had no form nor comeliness in him, and no beauty to make him desirable; and therefore his own friends were ashamed of him, and hid their faces from him; "he was despised and rejected of men," Isa. liii. 2, 3. Thus you see, he comes in the most despicable and disgraceful form of flesh that can be; and an abject among men; and as himself speaks in Psal. xxii. 6, "a worm, and not a man;" a reproach of men, and despised among the people. Now this, I say, is the crowning of the great mystery of godliness, which without all controversy, is the mystery in all the world that hath in it most greatness and goodness combined together, that is the subject of the highest admiration, and the fountain of the sweetest consolation that either reason or religion can afford. The mysteries of the Trinity are so high, that if any dare to reach at them, he doth but catch the lower fall; it is as if a worm would attempt to touch the sun in the firmament. But this mystery is God coming down to man, to be handled and seen of men, because man could not rise up to God's highness. It is God descending to our baseness, and so coming near us to save us. It is not a confounding but a saving mystery. There is the highest truth in it, for the understanding to contemplate and admire; and there is the greatest good in it, for the will to choose and rest upon. It is contrived for wonder and delight to men and angels. These three, which the angelic

song runs upon, are jewels of it,—"glory to God, peace on earth, and good-will towards men."

XII.

Verse 3.—For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, &c.

Of all the works of God towards man, certainly there is none hath so much wonder in it, as the sending of his Son to become man; and so it requires the exactest attention in us. Let us gather our spirits to consider of this mystery;—not to pry into the secrets of it curiously, as if we had no more to do, but to satisfy our understandings; but rather that we may see what this concerns us, and what instruction or advantage we may have by it, that so it may ravish our affections. I believe, there is very palpable and gross ignorance in thousands of the very thing itself. Many who profess Jesus Christ, know not his natures, or his glorious person,—do not apprehend either his highness as God, or his lowness as man. But truly, the thing that I do most admire, is, that those who pretend to more knowledge of this mystery, yet few of them do enter upon any serious consideration about it,—for what use and purpose it is; though it be the foundation of our salvation, the chief ground of our faith, and the great spring of our consolation. Yet to improve the knowledge of it to any purpose of that kind, is a thing so rare, even among true Christians, that it is little the subject of their meditation. I think, indeed, the lively improvement of this mystery of godliness would be very effectual to make us really what we are said to be, that is, Christians. There is something to this purpose, 1 John iv. 2, 3, 15, and v. 1. The confessing and knowing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and is the Son of God, before his taking on flesh, is made a character of a spiritual man that dwelleth in God. Not that a bare external confession, or internal opinion and assent to such

a truth, is of so much value,—which yet is the height that many attain unto; but it is such a soul acknowledgment, such an heart approbation of this mystery, as draws alongst the admiration and affection after it, as fixeth the heart upon this object alone, for life and salvation. The devils confessed and believed, but they trembled at it, Luke iv. 34, 41. He was afraid of what he knew, but Peter confessed and loved what he knew; yea, he did cast his soul upon that Lord whom he confessed. It is such an acknowledgment of Christ, as draweth the soul, and unites it to him, by a serious and living embracement. Such a sight of Jesus Christ, hath both truth and goodness in it, in the highest measure; and so doth not only constrain the assent of the mind, but is a powerful attractive to the heart, to come to him, and live in him. I pray you consider then what moment is in this truth, that you may indeed apply your souls to the consideration of what is in Jesus Christ thus revealed, not simply to know it, but for a further improvement of it, to seek life in him, that the stamp and impression of this Saviour may be set so deeply on your souls, as that you may express this in a real confession of him in your words and works, Tit. i. 16. Matt. vii. 21. This is indeed to know and confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, to fetch thence the ground of all our hope and consolation, and to draw thence the most powerful motives to walking, "even as he walked," to improve it for confidence in him, and obedience to him.

I shall speak then a word of these two great ends and purposes,—of God's sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, his own glory, and man's good. The song of angels at his birth shews this,—"Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards man." His glory is manifested in it in an eminent manner. The glory of his wisdom,—that found out a remedy. What a deep contrivance was it! How infinitely beyond all creature inventions! Truly there are riches of wisdom, depths of wisdom in it. I think it could never have

entered the thought of men or angels;—all men once to be drowned under a deluge of sin and misery, and made subject to God's righteous judgment, and then to find out a way how to deliver and save so many! All the wisdom that shines in the order and beauty of the world, seems to be but a rude draught to this. Then, herein doth the glory of his mercy and grace shine most brightly, that he transfers the punishment due to man's sin upon his own Son, that when no ransom could be found by man, he finds it out, how to satisfy his own justice, and save us. Truly, this is the most shining jewel in the crown of God's glory,—so much mercy towards so miserable sinners, so much grace towards the rebellious. If he had pardoned sin, without any satisfaction, what rich grace had it been! But truly, to provide the lamb and sacrifice himself, to find out the ransom, and to exact it of his own Son, in our name, is a testimony of mercy and grace far beyond that. But then, his justice is very conspicuous in this work. And indeed these two do illustrate one another: the justice of God, in taking and exacting the punishment of sin upon his own well-beloved Son, doth most eminently heighten the mercy and grace of God towards us; and his grace and mercy in passing by us, doth most marvellously illustrate the righteousness of God, in making his own Son a curse for us. What testimony can be given in the world, of God's displeasure at sin, of his righteousness in punishing sin, like this! There was no such testimony of love to sinners, and no such demonstration of hatred at sin, imaginable. That he did not punish sin in us, but transfer it over on his most beloved Son, O what love and grace! and that he did punish his own Son, when standing in the place of sinners, O what righteousness and justice! This is that glorious mystery, the conjunction of these two resplendent jewels, justice and mercy, of love and displeasure, in one chain of Christ's incarnation, "into which the angels desire to look," 1 Pet. i. 12. And truly they do wonder at it, and praise from wonder. This is it, that the praises of

men and angels shall roll about eternally. David, Psal. ciii. 19, foreseeing this day, foretold it, that "angels should praise him;" and now it is fulfilled, when all these glorious companies of holy, powerful spirits, welcome the Son of God into the world, by that heavenly harmony of praise, Luke ii. 14.

What lumpishness and earthliness is in us, that we do not rise up above, to this melody in our spirits, to join with angels in this song; we, I say, whom it most concerns. The angels wonder, and praise and wonder at this, because the glory of God shines so brightly in it, as if there were many suns in one firmament, as the light of seven days in one. These three especially,—wisdom, mercy and grace, justice and righteousness, every one of them looks like the sun in its strength, carried about in this orb of the redemption of man, to the ravishing of the hearts of all the honourable and glorious companies above, and making them cheerfully and willingly to contribute all their service to this work, to be ministering spirits to wait on the heirs of salvation.

Now, when the glory of the highest raiseth up such a melodious song above, among angels, O what should both the glory of the highest God, and the highest good of man do to us! When the greatest glory of God, and the chiefest advantage of man are linked together in this chain, what should we do but admire and adore, adore and admire, and, while we are in this earth, send up our consent to that harmony in heaven!

In relation to our good, much might be said, but we shall briefly shew unto you, that it is the greatest confirmation of our faith, and the strongest motive to humility, that can be afforded. Now, if we could be composed thus unto confidence and reverence, to glorify him by believing, and to abase ourselves, to believe in him, and walk humbly with him, upon the meditation of Christ's coming in the flesh, this would make us true Christians indeed.

There is nothing, I know, more powerful to persuade

us of the reality of God's invitations and promises to us than this. We are still seeking signs and tokens of God's love, something to warrant us to come to God in Christ, and to persuade us that we shall be welcome; and many Christians puddle themselves in the mire of their own darkness and discouragement, because they cannot find any thing in themselves that can give but the least probable conjecture, that he will admit and welcome them to come to him, or that such precious promises, and sweet invitations, can belong to such sinners as they conceive themselves to be. Truly, my beloved, I think, while we exercise ourselves thus, we are seeking the sun with a candle, making that which is in itself as bright as the light to be more dark. The evidence of God's reality in offering life to you in Christ, and his willingness to receive you, is not without the compass of his invitation, and yet you seek it where it is least to be found, that is, in yourselves. But indeed, his invitations in the gospel, carry the evidence in their bosom,—that which is above all other signs and evidences, that he did even send his own Son in the flesh for this purpose. Is there any thing besides this, either greater or clearer? I think we are like those who, when they had seen many signs and wonders done by Christ, which did bear testimony to all the world of his divine nature, yet they would not be satisfied, but sought out another sign, tempting him, Matt. xvi. 1. And truly, he might return this answer to us, "O wicked and adulterous generation, that seeketh after a sign, there shall no sign be given to thee, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." The greatest testimony that can be imagined, is given already,—that the Father should send his only begotten and well-beloved Son into this state of a servant for man. If this do not satisfy, I know not what will. I see not how any work of his Spirit in us, can make so much evidence of his reality and faithfulness in the gospel, and of his willingness to welcome sinners. All the works of the creation, all the works of grace, are nothing to this, to manifest his love to men; and therefore there is a sin-

gular note upon it, "God so loved the world, that he sent his Son," John iii. 16. "And in this was love manifested, that he gave his Son," 1 John iv. 9. If men and angels had set themselves to devise and find out a pledge or confirmation of the love of God, they would have fallen upon some revelation unto, or some operation upon their spirits. But, alas! this is infinitely above that. His own express image, and the brightness of his glory, is come down to bear witness of his love; nay, he who is equal with himself in glory, is given as a gift to men; and is not he infinitely more than created gifts, or graces, who is the very spring and fountain of them all? "God so loved the world," that truly he gave no such gift besides, to testify such a love. Therefore, when all that he hath done in this kind, cannot satisfy thy scrupulous mind, but thou wilt still go on, to seek more confirmation of his readiness to receive thee, I think it is a tempting of the holy One, which may draw such an answer from him,—O wicked and adulterous person, there shall no sign be given thee, but that which is darker than the former, that which thou shalt understand less. Thou mayest get what thou seekest, perhaps some more satisfaction in thy own condition, but it shall plunge thee more in the issue. Thou shalt always be unsettled, and "unconstant as water, thou shalt not excel." I confess indeed, if we speak of the manifestation of one's particular interest in these promises, and of an evidence of the love of God to thee, in particular, then there must needs be something wrought by the Holy Spirit, on thy soul, to draw down the general testimony of God's love to mankind, into a particular application to thyself. But that I do not speak of now, because that is the sealing of the Spirit after believing; and because you are always unsettled in the first and main point, of flying unto the Son, and waiting on him for life, therefore have you so much inevidence and weakness in that which follows. That which I now speak of, is, that if this were cordially believed, and seriously considered, that "God sent his own Son in the flesh, to save sinners," you

could not readily have any doubt, but that your coming to him for salvation would be welcome. You could not say, that such precious invitations could not belong to sinners, or that he could not love the like of you. Truly, I think, if the general were laid to heart, that God hath so loved mankind, that he gave such a gift unto them, there is none could make any more question of his reality, when that gift is tendered to any in particular. Nay, I think it is the inconsideration of this general evidence and manifestation of love to the world, that makes you so perplexed in particulars. Could you have so much difficulty to believe his love to you, if you indeed believe that he hath loved the world, that is, so many thousands like you? Is there so much distance, I pray you, between you and another, as between him and all? If, then, he loves so many miserable sinners, is there any impossibility in it, but he may love you? For what is in them, that might conciliate his love? I tell you, why I think the right apprehension of the general truths of the gospel would be able, like the sun in its strength, to scatter all the clouds and mists of our particular interest-debates; because I find, that those very grounds, upon which you call in question your own particular interest, if you did consider them, you would find they go a further length, to conclude against all others; and either they have no strength in your case, or they will be of equal force to batter down the confidence of all the saints, and the certainty of all the promises. What is it that troubles you, but that you are sinners, and such sinners, so vile and loathsome? From whence you do conclude, not only that you have no present assurance of his love, but that he cannot love such a one as you are. Now, I say, if this hold good, in reference to you, take heed that you condemn not yourselves in that which you approve,—that is, that you do not dispute against the interest of all the saints, who were such as you are, and the truth of those fundamental positions of the gospel, "God so loved the world," &c. And so you do not only wrong yourselves, but all others; and

not only so, but you offer the greatest indignity to him that out of love sent his Son, and to him who, out of love, came and laid down his life. O consider how you indignify and set at nought that great manifestation of God's love, "God manifested in the flesh;" how you despise his love-pledge to sinners, a greater than which he could not give you, because as great as himself! O that you could see the consequence of your anxious and perplexing doubts!—that they do not only an injury to your own souls, but that they are of a more bloody nature. If they hold good, they will cut off the life and salvation of all believers, and, which is worse, they will, by an unavoidable consequence, conclude an antichristian point, that Christ is not come in the flesh. I beseech you, unbowel your evils, that you may abhor them.

This may strengthen our faith, and minister much consolation, in another consideration too; that which is laid down, Heb. ii. 17, and iv. 15, that he was "partaker of our nature, and in all things like unto his brethren, that so he might be a merciful High-priest, able to succour us, and touched with the feeling of our infirmities." What strong consolation may be sucked out of these breasts! When it was impossible that man could rise up to God, because of his infinite highness and holiness, behold, God hath come down to man, in his lowness and baseness. He hath sent down this ladder from heaven to earth, that poor wretched sinners may ascend upon it. It is come down, as low as our infirm, weak, and frail nature, that we may have easy coming up to it, and going up upon it to heaven. Therefore his flesh is called, a "new and living way," because a poor sinner may be assured of welcome and acceptation with one of his own kind, his brother,—(he was not ashamed to call us brethren,) "flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone." This may make boldness of access, that we have not God to speak to, or come to, immediately, as he is clothed with glory and majesty, and as the Jews heard him on mount Sinai, and desired a mediator between him and them; but that that

great prophet promised to them, hath come, and we have him between us and God,—as low as we, that we may speak to him, "riding upon an ass," a low ass, that every one may whisper their desires in his ear,—and yet as high as God, that he may speak to God, and have power with him. Truly this is a sweet trysting-place to meet God in, that no sinner may have any fear to come to it, to this treaty of peace and reconciliation. How may it persuade us of that great privilege, that we may "become the sons of God," when the Son of God is become the Son of man, John i. 11, 12. Truly, though it be hard to be believed, that such as we should become the sons of the great King; yet it is nothing so strange as this, that the eternal and only begotten Son of the great God, should become the son of wretched man. That highness will be easily believed, if we consider this lowness. It will not be so hard to persuade a soul, that there is a way of union and reconciliation to God, of being yet at peace with him, if this be pondered,—that God hath married his own nature with ours, in one person, to be a pledge of that union and peace. And then, how much quickening and comfort may it yield us, that he was not only a man, but a miserable man, and that not through any necessity of love and compassion. He had enough of mercy to save us as God, he had enough of love and compassion as man; but he would take on misery too, in his own person, that he might be experimentally merciful to us. Certainly, the experience of misery and infirmity must superadd some tenderness to the heart of our High-priest. But though it did not help him to be more pitiful, yet it was done for us, to help us to have more confidence in him, and boldness to come unto him. What an encouragement is it for a poor man to come unto the once poor Jesus Christ, who "had not where to lay his head!" He knows the evil of poverty, and he chose to know it, that he might have compassion on thee. With what boldness may poor afflicted and despised believers come to him! Why?

because he himself had experience of all that, and he was familiarly acquainted with grief and sorrow, therefore he can sympathize best with thee. Let us speak even of the sinful infirmities thou art subject to. That there might be a suitableness in him to help thee, he came as nigh as might be,—he was willing to be tempted to sin; and so he knows the power that temptations must have over weak and frail natures; but sin he could not, for that had been evil for us. Let this then give us boldness to come to him.

I would desire to persuade you to humility from this, according to the lesson Christ gives us, Matt. xi. 29, "Learn of me, I am meek and lowly." And the apostle makes singular use of this mystery of the abasement of the Majesty, to abate from our high esteem of ourselves, Phil. ii. 3—6. O should not the same mind be in us, that was in Christ! God abased, man exalted,—how unsuitable are these, think you! God lowly in condition and disposition; and man, though base in condition, yet high in his disposition, and in his own estimation! What more mysterious than God humbled? And what more monstrous than man proud? Truly, pride is the most deformed thing in a man, but in a Christian it is monstrous and prodigious. If he did humble himself out of charity and love, who was so high and glorious, how should we humble ourselves out of necessity, who are so low and base? And out of charity and love too, to be conformed and like unto him! Nature may persuade the one, but Christianity teacheth the other,—to be lowly in mind, and esteem every one better than ourselves. To be meek, patient, long-suffering, reason may persuade it, upon the consideration of our own baseness, emptiness, frailty, and nothingness. But this lesson is taught in Christ's school, not from that motive only,—the force of necessity, but from a higher motive,—the constraint of love to Jesus Christ,—"learn of me." Suppose there was no necessity of reason in it, yet affection might be a stronger necessity

to persuade conformity to him, and following his example, who became so low, and humbled himself to the death, even for us.

XIII.

Verse 3.—And for sin condemned sin in the flesh.

The great and wonderful actions of great and excellent persons must needs have some great ends answerable to them. Wisdom will teach them not to do strange things, but for some rare purposes; for it were a folly and madness to do great things to compass some small and petty end, as unsuitable as that a mountain should travail to bring forth a mouse. Truly we must conceive, that it must needs be some honourable and high business, that brought down so high and honourable a person from heaven as the Son of God. It must be something proportioned to his majesty and his wisdom. And indeed so it is. There is a great capital enemy against God in the world, that is, sin. This arch-rebel hath drawn man from his subordination to God, and sown a perpetual discord and enmity between them. This hath conquered all mankind, and among the rest, even the elect and chosen of God, those whom God had in his eternal counsel predestinated to life and salvation. Sin brings all into bondage, and exerciseth the most perfect tyranny over them that can be imagined; makes men to serve all its imperious lusts;—and then all the wages is death,—it binds them over to judgment. Now this sedition and rebellion being arisen in the world, and one of the most noble creatures carried away in this revolt, from allegiance to the divine majesty, the most holy and wise counsel of Heaven concludes to send the king's Son, to compesce this rebellion, to reduce men again unto obedience, and destroy that arch-traitor, sin, which his nature most abhors. And for this end the Son of the great King, Jesus Christ, came down into the world, to

deliver captive man, and to condemn conquering sin. There is no object that God hath so pure and perfect displeasure at as sin. Therefore he sent to condemn that which he hates most (and perfectly he hates it)—to condemn sin. And this is expressed as the errand of his coming, 1 John iii. 5, 8, "to destroy the works of the devil." All his wicked and hellish plots and contrivances against man, all that poison of enmity and sin, that out of envy and malice he spued out upon man, and instilled into his nature; all those works of that prince of darkness, in enticing man from obedience to rebellion, and tyrannizing over him since, by the imperious laws of his own lusts; in a word, all that work that was contrived in hell, to bring poor man down to that same misery with devils; all that Christ, the only begotten Son of the great King, came (for this noble business) to destroy it;—that tower which Satan was building up against heaven, and had laid the foundation of it as low as hell, this was Christ's business down among men, to destroy that Babylon, that tower of darkness and confusion, and to build up a tower of light and life, to which tower sinners might come, and be safe, and by which they might really ascend into heaven. Some do by these words "for sin," understand the occasion and reason of Christ's coming, that it was, because sin had conquered the world, and subjected man to condemnation; therefore, Jesus Christ came into the world to conquer sin and condemn it, that we might be free from condemnation by sin. And this was the special cause of his taking on flesh. If sin had not entered into the world, Christ had not come into it; and if sin had not erected a throne in man's flesh, Christ had not taken on flesh,—he had not come in the likeness of sinful flesh. So that this may administer unto us abundant consolation. If this was the very cause of his coming, that which drew him down from that delightful and blessed bosom of the Father, then he will certainly do that which he came for. He cannot fail of his purpose, he cannot miss his end: he must condemn sin, and save sinners. And truly this is wonderful love,

that he took sin only for his party, and came only for sin, or against sin, and not against poor sinners. He had no commission of the Father but this, as himself declares, John iii. 17; for "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." As one observes well, Christ would never have hinted at such a jealousy, or suggested such a thought to men's minds, had it not been in them before. But this we are naturally inclined unto,—to think hard of God, and can hardly be persuaded of his love, when once we are persuaded of our enmity. Indeed the most part of the world fancy a persuasion of God's love, and have not many jealousies of it, because they know not their own enmity against God. But let a man see himself indeed God's enemy, and it is very hard to make him believe any other thing of God, but that he carries a hostile mind against him. And therefore Christ, to take off this, persuades and assures us, that neither the Father nor he had any design upon poor sinners, nor any ambushment against them; but mainly, if not only, this was his purpose in sending, and Christ's in coming,—not against man, but against sin, not to condemn sinners, but to condemn sin, and save sinners. O blessed and unparalleled love! that made such a real distinction between sin and sinners, who were so really one. Shall not we be content to have that woful and accursed union with sin dissolved? Shall not we be willing to let sin be condemned in us, and to have our own souls saved? I beseech you, beloved in the Lord, do not think to maintain always Christ's enemy, that great traitor against which he came from heaven. Wonder that he doth not prosecute both as enemies; but if he will destroy the one and save the other, O let it be destroyed, not you; and so much the more, for that it will destroy you! Look to him, so iniquity shall not be your ruin, but he shall be the ruin of iniquity. But if you will not admit of such a division between you and your sins, take heed that you be not eternally undivided, that you have not one common lot for ever, that

is, condemnation. Many would be saved, but they would be saved with sin too; alas! that will condemn thee. As for sin, he hath proclaimed irreconcileable enmity against it, he hath no quarter to give it, he will never come in terms of composition with it, and all because it is his mortal enemy. Therefore let sin be condemned, that thou mayest be saved. It cannot be saved with thee, but thou mayest be condemned with it.

The words, "for sin," may be taken in another sense as fitly, "a sacrifice for sin," so that the meaning is,—Jesus Christ came to condemn and overthrow sin in its plea against us by a sacrifice for sin, that is, by offering up his own body or flesh. And thus you have the way and means how Christ conquered sin, and accomplished the business he was sent for. It was by offering a sacrifice for sin, to expiate wrath, and so satisfy justice. "The sting and strength of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," as the apostle speaks it, 1 Cor. xv. 55. We had two great enemies against us, two great tyrants over us,—sin and death. Death had passed upon all mankind. Not only the miseries of this life and temporal death had subjected all men, but the fear of an eternal death, of an everlasting separation from the blessed face of God, might have seized upon all, and subjected them to bondage, Heb. ii. 15. But the strength and sting of that is sin; it is sin that arms death and hell against us. Take away sin, and you take away the sting, the strength of death, —it hath no force or power to hurt man, but death being the wages due for sin, Rom. vi. 23. All the certainty and efficacy in the wages, flows from this work of darkness,—sin. But now "the strength of sin is the law." This puts a poisonable and destructive virtue in the sting of sin, for it is the sentence of God's law, and the justice and righteousness of God, that hath made so inseparable a connection between sin and death. This gives sin a destroying and killing virtue. Justice arms it with power and authority to condemn man, so that there can be no freedom, no releasement from that condemnation, no eschew-

ing that fatal sting of death, unless the sentence of God's law, which hath pronounced "thou shalt die," be repealed, and the justice of God be satisfied by a ransom. And this being done, the strength of sin is quite gone, and so the sting of death removed.

Now, this had been impossible for man to do. These parties were too strong for any created power. The strength of sin to condemn may be called some way infinite, because it flows from the unchangeable law of the infinite justice of God. Now, what power could encounter that strength, except that which had infinite strength too? Therefore, it behoved the Son of God to come for this business; to condemn sin and save the sinner. And being come, he yokes first with [*i. e.* assails] the very strength of sin, for he knew where its strength did lie, and so did encounter first of all with that,—even the justice of his Father, the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us; for if once he can set them aside, as either vanquished or satisfied, he hath little else to do. Now, he doth not take a violent way in this either. He doth it not with the strong hand, but deals wisely, and (to speak so with reverence) cunningly in it; "he came under the law, that he might redeem them who were under the law," Gal. iv. 4. Force will not do it, the law cannot be violated, justice cannot be compelled to forego its right. Therefore our Lord Jesus chooseth, as it were, to compound with the law,—to submit unto it: "He was made under the law," he who was above the law, being lawgiver in mount Sinai, Acts vii. 38. Gal. iii. 19. He cometh under the bond and tie of it, to fulfil it: "I came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it," Matt. v. 17. He would not offer violence to the law, to deliver sinners contrary to the commination of it, or without satisfaction given unto it, for that would reflect upon the wisdom and righteousness of the Father who gave the law. But he doth it better in an amicable way,—by submission and obedience to all its demands. Whatsoever it craved of the sinner, he fulfils that debt. He satisfies the bond in

his own person by suffering, and fulfils all the commandments by obedience. And thus, by subjection to the law, he gets power over the law, because his subjection takes away all its claim and right over us. Therefore it is said, that he blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us, by nailing it to his cross; and so took it out of the way, Col. ii. 14. Having fulfilled the bond, he cancelled it, and so it stands in no force either against him or us. Thus, the strength of sin, which is the law, is removed; and by this means, sin is condemned in the flesh. By the suffering of his flesh, it is fallen from all its plea against sinners; for, that upon which it did hang, viz. the sentence of the law, is taken out of the way, so that it hath no apparent ground to fasten any accusation upon a poor sinner that flies into Jesus Christ, and no ground at all to condemn him,—it is wholly disabled in that point. For, as the Philistines found where Samson's strength lay, and cut his hair, so Christ hath in his wisdom found where the sin's plea against man lay, and hath cut off the hair of it, that is, the hand-writing of ordinances which was against us.

This is that which hath been shadowed out from the beginning of the world, by the types of sacrifices and ceremonies. All those offerings of beasts, of fowls, and such like under the law, held forth this one sacrifice, that was offered in the fulness of time, to be a propitiation for the sins of the world. And something of this was used among the Gentiles before Christ's coming, certainly by tradition from the fathers, who have looked afar off to this day, when this sweet-smelling sacrifice should be offered up to appease Heaven. And it is not without a special providence, and worthy the remarking, that since the plenary and substantial One was offered, the custom of sacrificing hath ceased throughout the world. God, as it were, proclaiming to all men, by this cessation of sacrifices, as well as silence of oracles, that the true atonement and propitiation is come already, and the true prophet is come from heaven, to reveal God's mind unto the world.

There were many ceremonies in sacrificing observed, to hold out unto us the perfection of our atonement and propitiation. They laid their hands on the beast, who brought it, to signify the imputation of our sins to Christ, that "he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And truly, it is worth the observation, that even those sacrifices for sin were called sin; and so the word is used promiscuously in Leviticus, to point out unto us, that Jesus Christ should make his soul sin, Isa. liii. 10, that is, a sacrifice for sin, and be made sin for us, that is, a sacrifice for sin. When the blood was poured out ("because without shedding of blood there was no reconciliation," Heb. x.) the priest sprinkled it seven times before the Lord, to shadow out the perfection of that expiation for our sins, in the virtue and perpetuity thereof, Heb. ix. 26, that he should appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;—to put it away, as if it had never been, by taking it on him and bearing it. And then the high priest was to bring in of the blood into the holy place and within the vail, and sprinkle the mercy seat, to shew unto us, that the merit and efficacy of Christ's blood should enter into the highest heavens, to appease the wrath of God. Our high priest, by his own blood, hath entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, Heb. ix. 12. And truly this is that sacrifice, which being offered without spot to God, pacifies all, ver. 14. Sin hath a cry, it crieth aloud for vengeance. This blood silenceth it, and composeth all to favour and mercy. It hath so sweet and fragrant a smell in God's account, that it fills heaven with the perfume of it. He is that true scape-goat, who, notwithstanding that he did bear all the sins of his people, yet he did escape alive. Albeit he behoved to make his soul a sacrifice for sin, and so die for it; yet by this means he hath condemned sin, by being condemned for sin. By this means he hath overcome death and the grave, by coming under the power of death, and so is now alive for ever, to improve his victory

for our salvation. And by taking on our sins he hath fully abolished the power and plea of them, as the goat that was sent to the wilderness out of all men's sight was not to be seen again. Truly, this is the way how our sins are buried in the grave of oblivion, and removed as a cloud, and cast into the depths of the sea, and sent away as far as the east is from the west, that they may never come into judgment against us to condemn us, because Christ, by appeasing wrath and satisfying justice by the sacrifice of himself, hath overthrown them in judgment, and buried them in the grave with his own body.

You see then, my beloved, a solid ground of consolation against all our fears and sorrows—an answer to all the accusations of our sins. Here is one for all, one above all. You would have particular answers to satisfy your particular doubts. You are always seeking some satisfaction to your consciences besides this; but believe it, all that can be said, besides this atonement and propitiation, is of no more virtue to purge your consciences, or satisfy your perplexed souls, than those repeated sacrifices of old were. Whatsoever you can pitch upon besides this, it is insufficient; and therefore you find a necessity of seeking some other grace or qualification to appease your consciences, even as they had need to multiply sacrifices. But now, since this perfect propitiation is offered up for our sins, should not all these vain expiations of your works cease? Truly, there is nothing can pacify Heaven but this; and nothing can appease thy conscience on earth but this too. If you find any accusation against you, consider Christ hath, by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in his own flesh. The marks of the spear, of the nails, of the buffetings of his flesh—these are the tokens and pledges, that he encountered with the wrath due to your sins, and so hath cut off all the right that sin hath over you. If thou canst unfeignedly in the Lord's sight, say, that it is thy soul's desire to be delivered from sin, as well as wrath, thou wouldst gladly fly from condemnation; then come to him who hath condemned sin, by suffering

the condemnation of sin, that he might save those who desire to fly from it to him.

XIV.

Verse 4.—That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

God having a great design to declare unto the world both his justice and mercy towards men, he found out this mean most suitable and proportioned unto it, which is here spoken of in the third verse—to send his own Son to bear the punishment of sin, that the righteousness of the law might be freely and graciously fulfilled in sinners. And, indeed, it was not imaginable by us, how he could declare both in the salvation of sinners. We could not have found out a way to declare his righteousness and holiness, which would not have obscured his mercy and grace; nor a way to manifest his grace and mercy, which would not have reflected upon his holiness and justice, according to the letter of the law that was given out as the rule of life. He that doth them shall live in them; "and cursed is every one that doeth them not," &c. What could we expect, if this be fulfilled, as it would appear, God's truth and holiness require. Then we are gone,—no place for mercy, if this be not fulfilled, that the mercy may be shewed in pardoning sin. Then the truth and faithfulness of God seem to be impaired. This is the strait that all sinners would have been into, if God had not found such an enlargement as this—how to shew mercy without wronging justice; and how to save sinners without impairing his faithfulness. Truly, we may wonder, what was it that could straiten his majesty so, that he must send his own Son, so beloved of him, and bruise him, and hide his face from him; yea, and torment him, and not let the cup pass from him for any intreaties. Might he not more easily have never added

such a commination to the law,—"thou shalt die;" or more easily relaxed and repealed that sentence, and passed by the sinner without any more, than exacted so heavy a punishment from one that was innocent? Was it the satisfaction of his justice that straitened him, and put a necessity of this upon him? But truly it seems it had been no more contrary to righteousness to have passed over the sinner, without satisfaction, than to require and take it off one who was not really guilty. The truth is, it was not simply the indispensible necessity of satisfying justice, that put him upon such a hard and unpleasant work, as the bruising of his own Son; for, no doubt, he might have as well dispensed with all satisfaction, as with the personal satisfaction of the sinner. But here the strait lay, and here was the urgency of the case: He had a purpose to declare his justice, and therefore a satisfaction must be had, not simply to satisfy righteousness, but rather to declare his righteousness, Rom. iii. 25. Now, indeed, to make these two shine together in one work of the salvation of sinners, all the world could not have found out the like of this,—to dispense with personal satisfaction in the sinner, which the rigour of the law required, and so to admit a sweet moderation and relaxation, that the riches of his grace and mercy might be manifested, and yet withal, to exact the same punishment of another willingly coming in the sinner's place, to the end that all sinners may behold his righteousness and justice. And so this work of the redemption of sinners, hath these names of God published by himself, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) to Moses; engraven deeply upon it; mercy and goodness spelled out at length in it,—for love was the rise of all, and love did run alongst in all; yet so, as there is room to speak out his holiness, and righteousness, and justice, not so much to affright sinners, as to make his mercy the more amiable and wonderful.

I know not a more pressing ground of strong consolation, nor a firmer bulwark of our confidence and salvation, than this conjunction of mercy and justice in the business.

There might have been always a secret hink [*i. e.* loop, tie, knot, or entanglement] of jealousy and suspicion in our minds, when God publisheth mercy and forgiveness to us freely. O how shall the law be satisfied, and the importunity of justice and faithfulness, that hath pronounced a sentence of death upon us, answered! Shall not the righteous law be a loser this way, if I be saved, and it not satisfied by obedience or suffering! How hard would it be to persuade a soul of free pardon, that sees such a severe sentence standing against it! But now there is no place for doubting. All is contrived for the encouragement and happiness of poor sinners, that we may come to him with full persuasion of his readiness and inclineableness to pardon, since Jesus Christ hath taken the law and justice of God off our head, and us off their hand; and since he hath reckoned with them, for what is due by us, and paid it without us,—then we have a clear way, and ready access to pardon, and to believe his readiness to pardon. And this is it which is holden out here,—Christ condemning sin in the flesh, or punishing sin in his own flesh, giving a visible and sensible representation of the justice and righteousness of God in punishing sin, and that in his own flesh, offering up himself as the condemned sinner, and hanging up to the view of all the world, as an evident testimony of the justice and righteousness of God against sin, and by this means cutting off the very strength of sin—the law, by fulfilling it. In Christ's sufferings you may behold, as in a clear mirror, the hatred and displeasure of God against sin, the righteousness of God in punishing sin. "Him hath God set forth to the world to be a propitiation, to declare the righteousness of God," Rom. iii. 24, 25. In this crucified Lord, you may behold the sensible image, and the most lively demonstration of holiness and righteousness. Christ's flesh bare the marks of both,—God's holiness in hating sin, his righteousness in punishing it, and both in his beloved and only begotten Son's person,—in his flesh; and all for this purpose, that the law might be no loser by our salvation,

"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," &c.

This is that which Christ says, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," Matt. v. 17; and which Paul seconds, "Is the law then made void by faith? God forbid: it is rather established," Rom. iii. 31. The law and justice come better to their own, by our cautioner, than by us. There is no such way conceivable, to satisfy them fully, as this, whether you look to the commandment or the curse.

The commandment never got such satisfaction in any person, as in Christ's; he hath fulfilled it by obedience. "It becomes us," saith he, "to fulfil all righteousness," Matt. iii. 15, both moral and ceremonial; so that "there was no guile found in his mouth,"—he knew no sin, he was holy and harmless. His Father's will was his soul's delight, —"I delight to do thy will," Psal. xl. 8. It was more to him than his necessary food, his meat and drink. There was so absolute a correspondency between his will and God's will, and between his way and his will, that it was not possible that any difference should fall between them. His obedience had more good in it (so to speak) than Adam's disobedience had evil in it, Rom. v. 18, 19. Adam's disobedience was but the sin of a finite creature, but Christ's obedience was the work of an infinite person. I think there was more real worth in Christ's obedience to the commands, than in all the united service and obedience of men and angels. All the love, delight, fear, and obedience flowing from these,—take them in one bundle, as they will be extended and multiplied to all eternity; there is something in Christ's that elevates it above all, and puts a higher price upon it. The transcendent dignity of his person,—his own Son "made under the law," Gal. iv. 4,—that is more worth than if all men and angels had been made under it. It had been no humiliation, but rather the exaltation of an angel, to be obedient to God. That subordination to a law, is the highest top of the creature's advancement. But he was such a person,

as his obedience was a humbling himself: "He humbled himself, and became obedient, even to the death," Phil. ii. 8; and though he was the Son of God, yet he stooped to learn obedience, Heb. v. 8. Now indeed the commandment comes to it better, by this means, to have such a glorious person under it, than if it had poor naughty us under it; and that is fulfilled by him, when otherwise it would never have been done. I suppose that justice had exacted the punishment of us: As we could never have ended suffering to all eternity, so we would never have begun new obedience to the command to all eternity. Thus, except Christ had taken it off us, and us off its hand, it would never have been fulfilled, since it was first broken. Next, the curse of the law could not get fuller satisfaction than in Christ. I suppose it had fallen upon the sinner: There is not so much worth in the creature's extremest sufferings, as to compensate the infinite wrongs done to the holiness and righteousness of God. Therefore, what was wanting in the intrinsic value of the creature's suffering, behoved to be made up in the infinite extent of it, and eternal continuance of it upon the creature. Thus, there could never be a determined time assigned, in which the curse were fulfilled, and in which, justice could say,—hold, I have enough. It is as if a man were owing an infinite debt, and he could get nothing to defray it, but poor petty sums, which being all conjoined, cannot amount to any proportion of it. Therefore, since he cannot get one sum in value equal to it, he must be eternally paying it in smalls, according to his capacity. And so, because the utmost farthing cannot be won at, [*i. e.* reached] he can never be released out of prison. But our Lord Jesus hath satisfied it to the full. He was a more substantial debtor, and because of the infinite dignity of his person, there was an intrinsic value upon his sufferings, proportioned unto the infiniteness of man's sin; so that he could pay all the debt in a short time, which a sinner could but have done to all eternity. Now, you know, any man would rather

chuse such a cautioner, that can solidly satisfy him in gross, and pay all the sum at once, than such a principal, that because of his inability, cannot amount to any considerable satisfaction in many years. And even so it is with the law and justice of God. They hold themselves better contented in Christ than in us, in his being "made a curse," than the falling of the curse on us, Gal. iii. 13. And therefore God testifies it to poor sinners, "Deliver them, I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24;—and that is the ransom which Christ gave,—"his life for many," Matt. xx. 28.

You see then, how this conclusion follows, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," he having fulfilled it, and satisfied it so fully, both by obedience to the commandment, and submission to the curse. It is all one in God's account, as if we had done it, because Christ was surety in our stead, and a common person representing us, and therefore his paying of the debt acquits us at the hand of justice, and whatsoever he did to fulfil all righteousness, that is accounted ours, because we were represented in him, and judicially one with him. And therefore, we were condemned when he was condemned; we were dead when he died,—and so the righteousness of the law, in exacting a due punishment for sin, was fulfilled for us in him; and it is all one as if it had been personally us. And this is laid down as the foundation of that blessed embassy or message of reconciliation to sinners, as that upon which God is in Christ reconciling and beseeching us to be reconciled, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, 21,—"Him who knew no sin, hath he made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." You see the blessed exchange that he hath made with us,—he hath laid our sins on sinless Christ, and laid Christ's righteousness on sinful us. Christ took our sins on him, that he might give us his righteousness; and by virtue of his transaction and communication, as it was righteous with God to condemn sin in Christ's flesh, because our sin was upon him, so it is as just with him to

impute righteousness to us, because we were in him. And as the law made him a curse, and exacted the punishment of him, it is as righteous with the Lord to give us life and salvation, and to forgive sin, as John speaks, 1 Epistle i. 19, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins."

Now consider this, my beloved, for it is propounded unto you as the greatest persuasive to move you to come to Jesus Christ,—there is such a clear and plain way in him to salvation. If this do not move your hearts, I know not what will. I do not expect that your troubles in this world,—the frequent lashes of judgment, the impoverishing and exhausting of you, the plucking away of those things you loved, the disquieting your peace so often, that any of those things that have the image of wrath upon them, can drive you to him, and make you forsake your way, when such a motive as this doth not prevail with you. O what heart could stand against the power of this persuasion, if it were but rightly apprehended! Who would not willingly fly into this city of refuge, if they did but know aright the avenger of blood that pursues them, and what safety is within? You are always imagining vain satisfactions to the law of God; how great weight doth your fancy impose upon your tears, your confessions, your reformations! If you can attain any thing of this kind, that is it which you give to satisfy justice, it is that wherewith you pretend to fulfil the law. But if it could be so, wherefore should God have sent his Son to condemn sin, and purchase righteousness by him? I beseech you, once know and consider your estate, that you may open your hearts to this Redeemer, that you may be willing to be stripped naked of all your imaginary righteousness, to put on this which will satisfy the law fully. Will you die in your sins, because you will not come to him to have life? Will you rather be condemned with sin, than saved with Christ's righteousness? And truly, there is no other altar that will preserve you but this. Now, if any, apprehending their own misery, be hardly pursued in

their consciences, by the law of God, I beseech you come hither, and behold it satisfied and fulfilled. "I beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God;" to lay down all hostile affections, and come to him, because "God is in Christ reconciling the world, and not imputing their sins," because he hath imputed them already to Christ, "him who knew no sin," &c., and he is in Christ, imputing his righteousness to sinners.

XV.

Verse 4.—That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.

THINK not, saith our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "that I am come to destroy the law,—I am come to fulfil it," Matt. v. 17. It was a needful caveat, and a very timeous advertisement, because of the natural misapprehensions in men's minds of the gospel. When free forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting, is preached in Jesus Christ, without our works; when the mercy of God is proclaimed in its freedom and fulness, the heart of man is subject to a woful misconceit of Christ, as if by these a latitude were given, and a liberty proclaimed to men to live in sin. That which is propounded as the encouragement of poor sinners, to come to God, and forsake their own wicked way, is miserably wrestled upon a mistake, to be an encouragement to revolt more and more. Righteousness and life, by faith in a Saviour, without the works of the law, is holden out as the grand persuasion of the gospel, to study obedience to the law. And yet such is the perverseness of many hearts, that either in opinion or practice, they so carry themselves, as if there were an inconsistency between Christ and the law, between free justification and sanctification,—as if Christ had come to redeem us, not from sin, but to sin. Now, to prevent this, "think not," saith he, "that I am come to destroy the law." Do not fancy to yourselves a liberty to live in sin,

and an immunity from the obligation of a commandment, because I have purchased an immunity and freedom from the curse. No, "I am come to fulfil it" rather, not only in mine own person, but in yours also. And to this purpose, Paul, Rom. iii. 31, "Do we then make void the law by faith?" It is so natural to our rebellious hearts, to desire to be free from the yoke of obedience, and therefore we fancy such a notion of faith, as may not give itself to working in love, as is active in nothing but imagination. The apostle abominates this,—"God forbid," he detests it, as impious and sacrilegious; "yea, we establish it." So then, all returns to this, one of the great ends of Christ's coming in his flesh, and one main intendment of the gospel published in his name, is not merely to deliver us from wrath, and "redeem us from the curse," Gal. iii. 13. 1 Thess. i. 10, but also, and that especially, "to redeem us from all iniquity, that we might be a people zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14; and to take away sin, and "destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 5, 8. We spoke something before noon, how Christ hath fulfilled the law, and established it in his own person, by obedience and suffering,—neither of which ways it could be so well contented by any other. But there is yet a third way that he fulfils and establisheth it, and that is in our persons, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He hath obliged himself to fulfil it, not only for believers, but in believers. Therefore the promises run thus, "I will write my law in their hearts, and cause them to walk in my statutes," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Jer. xxxi. 33. Not only I delight to do thy will, but I will make them delight to do it also. And truly, in this respect, the law is more fulfilled and established by Christ, than ever it could have been, if man had been left to satisfy it alone. If we had reckoned alone with the law, we had been taken up eternally with satisfying for the breaches of it, so that there could be no access to obedience of the command, and no acceptance either. A sinner must first sa-

tisfy the curse, for the fault done, before ever he can be in a capacity to perform new obedience on the terms of acceptation of it with God. Now the first would have taken up eternity, so that there can be no place of entry to the second; therefore, if Christ had not found out a way of free pardon of the sins that are past, and assurance of forgiveness for the time to come, the commandments of God would be wholly frustrated. But there is "forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," Psal. cxxx. 4. The word is also, "worshipped." Truly, my beloved, this is the fountain of all religion,—free forgiveness. There had been no religion, no worship of God, no obedience to his commands throughout all eternity; there should never have been any fear, any love, any delight in God, any reverence and subjection to him, if he had no forgiveness,—a treasure of mercies with him to bestow first upon sinners. And this makes access to stand and serve in his sight. The cloud of our transgressions is so thick and dark, that there could never have been any communion with God, if he had not found out the way to scatter and blot it out, for his own name's sake. Religion, then, must begin at this great and inestimable free gift of imputed righteousness,—of accounting us what we are not in ourselves, because found so in another. It begins at remission of sins. But that is not all. This hath a further end, and truly it is but introductive to a further end; that so a soul may be made partaker of the gift of holiness within, and "have that image of God renewed in holiness and righteousness." I would have you once persuaded to begin at this, to receive the free gift of another's righteousness, Rom. v. 17, and another's obedience, to find your own nakedness and loathsomeness without this covering, and how short all other coverings of your own works are. O that we could once persuade you to renounce yourselves, to embrace this righteousness! then it were easy to prevail with you to renounce sin, to put on holiness. I say, first, you must renounce yourselves, as undone in all you do, as loathsome in all that ever you

loved, and come under the wide and broad skirt of Christ's righteousness, which he did weave upon the earth, for to hide our nakedness. You must once have the righteousness of the law fulfilled perfectly by another, before you can have access to fulfil one jot of it yourselves, or any thing you do be accepted. And till this foundation be laid, you do but beat the air in religion, you build on the sand.

Now, if once you were brought this length, to renounce all confidence in yourselves, and to flee into Christ's righteousness, then it were easy to lead you a step further,—to renounce the love of your most beloved sins. And the more lovely that Christ's righteousness is in your eyes, the more beauty would holiness and obedience have in them also unto you. Then you would labour to walk after the guidance of the Spirit.

I would have the impression of this deep in your hearts,—that the gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, but a doctrine of the purest liberty, of the completest redemption. Many think it liberty to serve their lusts; and it is indeed as bonds and cords to restrain them. There is no man but would be content to be saved from the wrath to come; and therefore many snatch at such sentences of the gospel, and take them lightly, without consideration of what further is in it. But truly if this were all, it were not complete redemption, if there were not redemption from sin too, which is the most absolute tyrant in the world. I think a true Christian would account the service of sin bondage, though it were left at his own option. "He that commits sin, is the servant of sin;" therefore the freedom that Christ purchaseth, is freedom from sin, John viii. 38. I will say more. We are delivered from wrath, that so we may be redeemed from sin. We have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, that so the image of Christ may be renewed within us; this is the very end of that. I am sure any that discerns aright, knows sin to have infinitely more evil in it than punishment hath; nay, punishment is only evil, as it hath relation to sin. There is a beauty of justice and

righteousness in punishment, but there is nothing in sin, but deformity and opposition to his holiness. It is purely evil, and most purely hated of God. And if there were no more to persuade you that sin is infinitely more evil than pain, consider how our pain and punishment was really transferred upon the blessed Son of God, and that all this did not make him a whit the worse. But he was not capable of the real infusion of our sin. That would have made Christ as miserable, wretched, and impotent as any of us; that would have disabled him so far from helping us, that he would have had as much need of a mediator, as we,—all which were highly blasphemous to imagine. Look then how much distance and difference there was between suffering, dying Christ, and wretched men living in sin. None can say but he is infinitely better, even while in pain, nor the highest prince in pleasure, so much disproportion there is between sin and pain; so much is the one worse than the other. Do not think then that Christ died to purchase an indulgence for you to live in sin. Truly that were to take away the lesser evil, that the greater may remain; that were to deliver from one misery, that we may be more involved in that which is the greatest of all miseries. Nay, certainly if Christ be a Redeemer, he must redeem us from our most potent and accursed enemy,—sin; he must take away the root, the fountain of all misery,—sin; that which conceived in its womb all pains, sorrows, sicknesses,—death and hell. You have the great end of redemption expressed, Luke i. 74, 75, "That we being delivered from all our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness." It was that for which he made man at first, and it is that for which he hath made him again, "created unto good works," Eph. ii. 8. It was a higher design certainly, for which the Son of God became partaker of our nature, than only to deliver us from hell. No doubt it was to make us partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4; and this is the very nature of God,—holiness and goodness. As sin is the very nature and

image of the devil, so the great breach of the creation was the breaking off of this image of God, that was the heaviest fall of man, from the top of divine excellency, into the bottom of devilish deformity. Now it is this that is the great plot for which Christ came into the world,—to make up that breach, to restore man to that dignity again; so that redemption from wrath is but a step to ascend upon, to that which is truly God's design, and man's dignity,—conformity with God in holiness and righteousness.

O that you could be persuaded of this,—that Christ's business in the world, was not to bring a notion of an imaginary righteousness only, by mere imputation, but to bring forth a solid and real righteousness in our hearts, by the operation of his Spirit: I say, imputation, or accounting righteous, is but a mere imagination, if this lively operation do not follow. He came not only to spread his garment over our nakedness and deformity, but really and effectually to be a physician to save our souls, to cure all our inward distempers. The gospel is not only a doctrine of a righteousness without us, but of a righteousness both without, for, and within us too;—"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," &c. Christ without, happiness itself without, cannot make us happy, till they come in within us, and take up a dwelling in our souls. Therefore I declare unto the most part of you who pretend to expect salvation by Jesus Christ, that you are yet in your sins, and as yet you have no fellowship in this redemption. Do you think to walk after the course of the world, and the lusts of the flesh, to wallow in those common pollutions and uncleannesses among men, swearing, lying, contention, railing, wrath, malice, envy, drunkenness, uncleanness, and such like, and yet be in Christ Jesus? "Do not deceive yourselves, God is not mocked." He that is in Christ, is a new creature. His endeavour and study, his affection and desire, is toward a new walk after the Spirit. Are not most of you carnal, all flesh,—the flesh gives laws, and you obey

them? Are not your immortal souls enslaved to base lusts, to the base love of the world? Are they not prone to prostitute themselves to the service of your fleshly and brutish part? Why do you then imagine, that you are in Christ Jesus, partakers of his righteousness? Consider it in time, that so you may be indeed, what you now are not, but pretend to be. It is the opinion that you are in Christ already, that keeps you out of him.

But, on the other hand again, there is nothing here to discourage a poor soul, that thinks subjection to sin the greatest slavery, who would as gladly be redeemed from the power of it as from hell. I say to such, whose soul's desire it is to be purged from "all that filthiness of flesh and spirit," and whose continued aim is to walk in obedience,—though you have many failings, and often fall and defile yourself again, yet this comfort is holden out here unto you,—there is no condemnation to you; Jesus Christ hath condemned sin to save you, he hath fulfilled all righteousness for you; and therefore lay you the weight of your acceptation and consolation upon what he hath done himself, and not upon what is but yet a-doing in you. Do you not find, I say, that the grace of Jesus Christ, revealed in the gospel, is that which melts your hearts most? Is not the goodness of the Lord that which persuades you most? And do not these make you loathe yourself and love holiness? Encourage yourselves therefore in him. Hold fast the righteousness that is without you by faith, and certainly you shall find that righteousness and holiness shall in due time be fulfilled within you. I know no soul so wretched, but it may lay hold on that perfect righteousness of Christ's, and go under the covering of it, and take heart from it, if so be the desire and affection of their soul be directed to a further end, to have his Spirit dwelling within them, for the renewing of their heart "in righteousness and true holiness." I do not say, that this is a condition which you must perform before you venture to lay hold on Christ's righteousness without you; noways, but rather I

would declare unto you the very nature of faith in Christ, that it seeks delivery from wrath in him, not simply and lastly, but that a way may be made for redemption from sin, and that there may be a participation of that divine nature, which is most in its eye.

XVI.

Verse 4, 5.—Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh, &c.

If there were nothing else to engage our hearts to religion, I think this may do it,—that there is so much reason in it. Truly it is the most rational thing in the world, except some revealed mysteries of faith, which are far above reason, but not contrary to it. There is nothing besides in it, but that which is the purest reason. Even that part of it which is most difficult to man, that which concerns the moderating of his lusts and affections, and the regulating his walk and carriage;—there is nothing that Christianity requires in these matters, but that which may be persuaded by most convincing reasons, to be most suitable and comely for man, as man. You may take it in the subject in hand. There is nothing sounds harsher to men, and seems harder in religion, than such a victory over the flesh, such an abstractedness from sensual and earthly things. And yet, truly, there is nothing in the world, that more adorns and beautifies a man, nothing so elevates him above beasts as this, in so much that many natural spirits, void of this saving light, have notwithstanding been taken with somewhat of the beauty of it, and so far enamoured with the love of it, as to account all the world mad and brutish that followed these lower things, and enslaved themselves unto them. I take the two fountains of all the pollutions, disorders, and defilements among men, to be the inconsideration and ignorance of God, that eternal Spirit and Fountain-being, and the ignorance of our own souls, those immortal spirits

within us, which are derived from that Fountain-spirit. This is the misery of men, that scarce do they once seriously reflect upon their own spirits, or think what immortal souls are within them, and what affinity these have to the Fountain of all spirits. Therefore, do men basely throw down themselves to the satisfaction of the lusts of the flesh. Now, indeed, this is the very beginning of Christianity, to reduce men from these baser thoughts and employments, to the consideration of their immortal souls within. And, O how will a Christian blush to behold himself in that light, to see the very image of a beast upon his nature, to look on that slavery and bondage of his far better part, to the worst and brutish part in him, —his flesh!

If a man did wisely consider the constitution of his nature, from its first divine original, and what a thing the soul is, which is truly and more properly himself, than his body; what excellency is in the soul beyond the body, and so, what pre-eminency it advanceth a man unto beyond a beast,—he could not but account religion the very ornament and perfection of his nature. Reason will say, that the spirit should rule and command the body, that flesh is but the minister and servant of the spirit, that there is nothing the proper and peculiar good of man, but that which adorns and rectifies the spirit; that all those external things which men's senses are carried after, with so much violence, do not better a man, as man, but are common to beasts; that in these things, man's happiness as man, doth not all consist, but in some higher and more transcending good, which beasts are not capable of, and which may satisfy the immortal spirit, and not perish in the using, but live with it. All these things, the very natural frame and constitution of man doth convincingly persuade. Now then, may a soul think within itself, O how far am I departed from my original! How far degenerated from that noble and royal dignity, that God by the stamp of his image once put upon me! How is it that I am become a slave and drudge to that baser and

brutish part, the flesh? I would have you retire into your own hearts, and ask such things at them. "Man being in honour, and understanding not, is even like the beasts that perish." Truly we are become like beasts, because we consider not that we are men, and so advanced by creation far above beasts. The not reflecting on the immortal, spiritual nature of our souls, hath transformed us, in a manner, into the nature of beasts, perishing beasts. Christianity is the very transforming of a beast into a man, as sin was the deforming of a man into a beast. This is the proper effect of Christianity,—to restore humanity, to elevate it, and purify it from all those defilements and corruptions that were engrossed and incorporated into it, by the state of subjection to the flesh. And therefore the apostle delineates the nature of it unto us, and draws the difference wide between the natural man and a Christian.

The natures of things are dark and hidden in themselves, but they come to be known to us by their operations and acting. Their inclinations and instincts are known this way. Grace is truly a very spiritual thing, and the nature of it lies high. Yet as Christ could not be hid in the house, neither can grace be hid in the heart,—it will be known by its working. Christ can be better hid in a house than in the heart, because, when he is engaged to restore that heart and soul to its native dignity and pre-eminency over the flesh, this cannot but cause much disturbance in the man, for a season. To change governments, to cast out usurpers, and to restore the lawful and righteous owner to the possession of his right, cannot be done secretly and easily. It will shake the very foundations of a kingdom to accomplish it. So it is here,—the restitution of the soul to the possession of its right and dominion over the flesh,—the casting out of that tyrannous and base usurper, the flesh, cannot be done, except all the man know it, feel it, and in a manner be pained with it. Now, the nature of Christianity doth lay itself open to us in these two especially, in what

it minds and savours, and how it causeth to walk. Life is known especially by affection and motion. A feeling, thinking, savouring power, is a living power; so a moving, walking power is a living power, and these are here. The Christian is shortly described by his nature. He is one after the Spirit, not after the flesh; and by the proper characteristical operations of that nature, first, minding or savouring the things of the Spirit, which comprehends his inward thoughts, affections, intentions, and cogitations. All his inward senses are exercised about such objects. And then he is one walking after the Spirit; his motions are in a course of obedience, proceeding from that inward relish or taste that he hath of the things of God. It is not without very good reason, that the name of a Christian is thus expressed,—one after the Spirit. That is his character that expresses his nature unto us. Whether ye look to the original of Christianity, or the prime subject of it, or the chief end of it, it deserves to be called by this name. The original of it is very high, as high as that eternal Spirit, as high as the God of the spirits of all flesh. Things are like their original, and some way participate of the nature of their causes. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6. That which is born of God who is a Spirit, must be spirit, 1 John v. 1. How royal a descent is that! How doth it nobilitate a man's nature! Truly, all other degrees of birth among men are vain imaginary things, that have no worth at all, but in the fancies of men. They put no real excellency in men. But this is only true nobility. This alone doth extract a man *de fæce vulgi*, out of the dregs of the multitude. There is no intrinsic difference between bloods, or natures, but what this makes, this divine birth, this second birth. All other differences are but in opinion, this is in reality. It puts the image of that blessed Spirit upon a man. Truly, such a creature is not begotten in the womb of any natural cause, of any human persuasion, or enticing words of man's wisdom, of any external mercy or judgment. No instruction, no

persuasion, no allurement, nor affrightment can make you Christians in the Spirit, till the Spirit blow when it pleaseth, and create you again. It must come from above,—that power that can set your hearts aright, and make them to look straight above.

Christ Jesus came down from heaven unto the earth, and took on our flesh, that so the almighty Spirit might come down to transform our spirits, and lift them up from the earth to the heaven. We cast the seed into the ground of men's hearts, (and alas! it gets entry but in few souls, it is scattered rather on the highway side, and cannot reach into the arable ground of the heart); but it can do nothing without the influence of heaven, except the Spirit beget you again, by that immortal seed of the word. Therefore we would cease our wondering, that all the means of God's word and works do not beget more true Christians. I do rather wonder that any of Adam's wretched posterity should be begotten again, and advanced to so high a dignity, to be born of the Spirit. O that Christians would mind their original, and wonder at it, and study to be like it! If you believe and consider that your descent is from that uncreated Spirit, how powerful might that be to conform you more and more to him, and to transform more and more of your flesh into spirit! There is nothing will raise up the spirits of the children of princes more, than to know their royal birth and dignity. How should the consideration of this make your spirits suitable to your state or fortunes, as we use to say? You would labour to raise them up to that height of your original, and to walk worthy of that high calling. O that we could learn that instruction from it, which Paul gives, 1 Cor. i. 30, 31, "But of him are ye in Christ; therefore let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord!" Truly, a soul possessed with the meditation of this royal descent from God, could not possibly glory in those inglorious baser things, in which men glory, and could not contain or restrain gloriation and boasting in him. "The glory of many is their shame," because it is their sin, of which

they should be ashamed. But suppose that in which men glory, be not shame in itself, as the lawful things of this present world, yet certainly it is a great shame for a Christian to glory in them, or esteem the better of himself for them. If this were minded always,—that we are of God, born of God, what power do you think temptations, or solicitations to sin, would have over us! "He that is born of God sinneth not, he keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not," 1 John v. 18, 19. Truly, this consideration imprinted in the heart, would elevate us above all these baser persuasions of the flesh. This would make sin loathsome and despicable, as the greatest indignity we could do to our own natures. The strength and advantage of sin, is to make us forget what we are, whom we have relation unto,—to drink us drunk with the puddle of the world, or then with our own jealousies and suspicions, that we may forget our birth and state, and so be enticed to any thing. If you would have wherewith to beat back all the fiery darts of the devil, take the shield of this faith and persuasion; how would it silence temptations? "Shall I, who am a ruler, flee," saith Nehemiah? Shall I, who am born of the Spirit; shall I, who am of God in Christ, abase myself to such unworthy and base things? Shall I dishonour my father, and disgrace myself.

Then Christianity's chiefest residence, its royal seat, is in the spirit of man, and so he is one after the Spirit. "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds," Eph. iv. 23. As it is of a high descent, so it must have the highest and most honourable lodging in all the creation, that is, the spirit of a man. Without this there is no room else fit for it, and suitable to it, in this lower world. "My son give me thine heart," saith wisdom, Prov. xxiii. 26. It cares for nothing besides, if it get not the heart, the inmost cabinet of the imperial city of this isle of man; for "out of it are the issues of life," that flow into all the members. Do not think that grace will lodge one night in your outward man,—that you can put on Christianity

upon your countenance or conversation without. Except you admit it into your souls, it can have no suitable entertainment there alone. It is of a spiritual nature, and it must have a spirit to abide in. Every thing is best preserved and entertained by things suitable to its nature; such do incorporate together, and imbosom one with another; whereas things keep a greater distance with things different in nature. A flame will die out among cold stones, without oily matter. This heavenly fire that is descended into the world, can have nothing earthly to feed upon. It must die out, except it get into the immortal spirit, and then furnish, so to speak, perpetual nourishment to it, till at length all the spirit be set on flame, and changed, as it were, into that heavenly substance, to mount up above, from whence it came. Do not think, my beloved, to superinduce true religion upon your outside, and within to be as rotten sepulchres. You must either open your hearts to Christ, or else he will not abide with you. Such a noble guest will not stay in the suburbs of the city, if you take him not into the palace; and truly the palace of our hearts is too unworthy for such a worthy guest, it hath been so defiled by sin. How vile is it? But if you would let him enter, he would wash it and cleanse it for himself.

Will you know then the character of a Christian? He is one much within. He hath retired into his own spirit, to know how it goes with it; and he finds all so disordered and confused, all so unsettled, that he gets so much business to do at home, as he gets no leisure to come much abroad again. It is the misery of men, that they are wholly without, carried into external things only; and this is the very character of a beast, that it cannot reflect inwardly upon itself, but is wholly spent on things that are presented to the outward senses. There is nothing in which men are more assimilated to beasts than this, that we do not speak in ourselves, or return into our own bosoms, but are wholly occupied about the things that are without us. And thus it fares with us, as with the man

that is busy in all other men's matters, and never thinks of his own. His estate must needs ruin; all his affairs must be out of course. Truly, while we are immersed and drowned in external things, our souls are perishing, our inward estate is washing away. All our own affairs, that can only and properly be called ours, are disordered and jumbled. Therefore, Christianity doth first of all recall the wandering and vain spirit of man into itself, as that exhortation is, Psal. iv. 9, to "commune with his own heart," to make a diligent search of his own affairs; and, O how doth he find all out of course, as a garden neglected, all overgrown, as a house not inhabited!—all dropping through, in a word, wholly ruinous, through intolerable negligence! It was the first turn of the prodigal to return to himself, "he came to himself," Luke xv. 17. Truly, sin is not only an aversion from God, but it is an estrangement from ourselves, from our souls, from our own happiness. It is a madness that takes away the use of reason and consideration of our ownselves But grace is a conversion, not only to God, but to ourselves. It bringeth a man home to his heart, maketh him sober again who was beside himself. Hence that phrase, 1 Kings viii. 47, "When they shall turn to their own hearts, and return." It is the most laborious vanity, or the vainest labour, to compass heaven and earth,—to be so busied abroad,—to know other things, and then to know and consider nothing of that, which of all things most nearly concerns us,—ourselves. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" for that is himself. And what shall it profit to know all, and not know his soul, to be every where but where he ought to be. Well, a Christian is one called home from vain impertinent diversions, one that is occupied most about his soul and spirit, how to have all the disorders he finds in himself ordered, all those distempers cured, all those defilements washed. This is the business he is about in this world, "to wash his heart from wickedness," Jer. iv. 14,—to cleanse even vain thoughts, and

shut up from that ordinary repair, his own heart. He is about the inclosing it, to be a garden to the Well-beloved, to bring forth sweet fruits. He is about the renewing of it, the adorning it with the new man, against that day of our Bridegroom's appearing, and bringing him up to celebrate the marriage. Though he be in the flesh, yet he is most taken up with his spirit, how to have it restored to that primitive beauty and excellency, the image of God in it; how to be clothed with humility, and to put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,—that he accounts his beauty; how to rule his own spirit,—that he accounts only true fortitude; and thinks it a greater vassalage and victory to overcome himself than his enemy, and esteems it the noblest revenge, not to be like to other men that wrong him. He is occupied about the highest gain and advantage, viz. to save his spirit and soul; and accounts all loss to this,—to bring Jesus Christ into the heart, that this is the jewel he digs for, and esteems all dung in comparison of it.

If you be Christians after the Spirit, no doubt, you are busied this way about your spirit. For others, they are busied about the flesh,—to make provision for its lusts; and there needs no other mark to know them by. Alas! poor souls, that you have never yet adverted that you have spirits, immortal beings within you, which must survive this dust, this corruptible flesh; what will ye do, when you cannot have flesh to care for? When your spirits can have nothing to be carried forth into, but must eternally dwell within the bosom of an evil conscience, and be tormented with that worm, the bitter remembrance of the neglect of your spirits, and utter estrangement from them, while you were in the body. Then you must be confined within your own evil consciences, and be imprisoned there for ever, because, while yet there was time and season, you were always abroad, and everywhere, but within your own hearts and consciences,—and is not that a just recompense?

Then again, as Christianity descends from the Father

of Spirits, into the spirit of a man, to lodge there for a while, it doth at length bring up the spirit of a man, and unites it to that eternal Spirit; and so, as the original was high and divine, the end is high too. It issues out of that Fountain, and returns with the heart of man, to imbosom itself in that again. And truly, this is the great excellency of true religion above all those things you are busied about, that it elevates the spirit of a man to God, that it will never rest, till it have carried it above to the Fountain-spirit. Our spirits are sparks and chips, to speak so with reverence, of that divine Being; but now they are wholly immersed and sunk into the flesh, and into the earth by sin, till grace come down and renew them, and extract them out of that dunghill, and purify them. And then they are, as in a state of violence, always striving to mount upwards, till they be embodied, or rather inspirited, so to speak, in that original Spirit, till they be wholly united to their own element, the divine nature. You know Christ's prayer, John xvii. "That they may be one, as we are one, I in them, and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one," ver. 22, 23. Then spirits have attained perfection, then "will they rest from their labours," when they are one with him. This is the only centre of spirits, in which they can rest immoveable. You find all the desires and affections of the saints are as so many breathings upward, pantings after union with him, and longings to be intimately present with the Lord. Therefore a Christian is one after the Spirit, groaning to be all spirit, to have the earthly house of this tabernacle dissolved, and to be clothed upon with that house from heaven. He knows with Paul, that he is not at home, though he be at home in the body, because the body is that which separates from the Lord, which partition wall he would willingly have taken down, that his spirit might be at home, present with the Lord, 2 Cor. vi. 1, &c. "Who knoweth (saith Solomon) the spirit of a man that ascends upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth," Eccles. iii. 21. Truly, the natural motion

of man's spirit, should be to ascend upward to God who gave it. When this frail and broken vessel of the body is dissolved into the elements, the higher and purer nature that lodged within it should fly upwards to heaven; even as the spirit of the beasts, being but the prime and finer part of the body, not different in nature from the earth, naturally falls down to the earth with the body, and is dissolved into the elements. But I think, the consideration of that woful disorder, that sin hath brought into the world, that all things in man are so degenerated and become brutish, both his affections and his conversation, that carnal and sensual lusts have the whole dominion over men; I say, the serious and earnest view of this might make a man suspect and call in question, whether or not there be any difference between men and beasts. Whether or not there be any spirit in the one of a higher nature than in the other? Truly, it would half persuade, that there is no immortal spirit in man, else how could he be such a beast all his time, "serving diverse lusts." Can it be possible, might one think, that there is any spirit in men, that can ascend to heaven, when there is no motion thither, to be observed among men? I beseech you, consider this,—the spirit must either ascend or descend when it goes out of the body, as now in affection and endeavour it ascends or descends while it is in the body. There is an indispensable connection between these. What way soever the spirit aims at, which way soever it turns and directs its flight, thither it shall be constrained to go eternally. Do you think, my beloved, while you are in the body, to bow down yourselves to the earth, to descend into the service of the flesh all your time, never once seriously to rise up in the consideration of eternity, or lift up your heads above temporal and earthly things, and yet in the close to ascend unto heaven? No, no, do not deceive yourselves; you must go forward. This life and eternity make one straight line, either of ascent or descent, of happiness or misery; and since you have bowed down always, while in the body, there is no rising up after it. Forward you must

go, and that is downward to that element, into which you transformed your spirits; that is, the earth, or below the earth,—to hell. Your spirits have most affinity with these, and down they must go, as a stone to the earth. But if you would desire to have your spirits ascending up to heaven, when they are let out of this prison, the body, take heed which way they turn. Bend and strive, while here in the body. If your strugglings be to be upward to God, if you have discovered that blessedness which is in him, and if this be the predominant of your spirit, that carries it upwards in desires and endeavours, and turns it off the base study of satisfying the flesh, and the base love of the world; if thy soul be mounting aloft, on these wings of holy desires of a better life than can be found in any thing below, certainly the motion of thy spirit will be in a straight line upward. When thou leavest thy dust to the earth, angels wait to carry that spirit to that bosom of Christ, where it longed and liked most to be. But devils do attend the souls of most part of men, to thrust them down below the earth, because they did still bend down to the earth.

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